

SPEECH BY: DATO' SERI DR. MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD
(PRIME MINISTER)

EVENT: AT THE OFFICIAL DINNER GIVEN IN HIS HONOUR BY HIS EXCELLENCY
MR. CONSTANTIN DESCALESCU PRIME MINISTER OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC
OF ROMANIA

VENUE: SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF ROMANIA

DATE: 16 MAY 1983

TIME:

Your Excellency Mr. Constantin Descalescu,
Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic
of Romania,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of my wife and members of my delegation, let me say how happy we are to be here in the Socialist Republic of Romania, and to thank Your Excellency, the Government and people of Romania for the warm welcome accorded to us. This is my first visit to your beautiful country and I hope that it will contribute to the development and strengthening of cooperation and our friendly relations. I would like also to thank you for the kind remarks which you have just made.

2. Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between Malaysia and Romania in 1969, both our countries have been able to register steady development in our relations through economic cooperation. Although our two countries are separated by geographical distance, distinct culture and governmental set-up, these have not prevented us from exchanging visits at various levels from time to time which have served to foster understanding and goodwill between us. Our ties of friendship and cooperation have been further augmented by our shared commitments to the ideals and aspirations of the United Nations Charter and by the similarity of views that we hold on many international issues.

Your Excellency,

3. The state visit by President Nicolae Ceausescu to Malaysia in November, 1982 was a significant milestone in the development of our relations. It provided a further impetus to relations between our two countries and forged new links in various fields of cooperation that are mutually beneficial. The agreements reached between us during President Ceausescu's visit form a solid basis of our bilateral cooperation, particularly in the economic field. It is my intention not only to maintain this new momentum towards closer ties between us, but also to develop and strengthen our relations further. We already have the Joint-Commission which provides a ready vehicle to review

the progress of our economic cooperation. I am certain that the Joint-Commission will be able to identify concrete areas and provide the necessary measures to increase our bilateral cooperation.

4. Malaysia has consistently adhered to a policy of conducting friendly relations and meaningful cooperation with all countries, irrespective of their ideology or governmental system, based on the principles of respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations, non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations and peaceful settlement of disputes. It is through strict adherence to these principles, that small nations such as ours, can hope to enjoy peace, security and stability, which together form the essential climate for economic progress, prosperity and well-being of our peoples.

5. Adherence to these cardinal principles of international relations is all the more important today when the world is beset by economic, political and social crises, all of which seem to defy solution and could precipitate a breakdown of international law and order. The prolonged economic recession has affected almost all countries in varying degrees, but it is the developing countries that are most affected. Invariably, the position of the developing countries has been exacerbated by the short-sighted policies and practices of the developed countries that hamper efforts to bring about a more equitable and fair system of international trade. Developing countries consistently witness the imposition of protectionist measures, increasing difficulty in getting access to markets for their goods, poor returns for their export products, manipulated commodity markets, and high interest rates from the developed countries, when these same countries have pledged that they are committed to liberalising the system of international trade. We have yet to see a more honest and sincere effort by the developed countries to bring order back into the world economy, after years of rhetoric at numerous fora.

6. Developing countries which are shouldering the burden of vast development expenditure, in order to sustain credible growth rates and improve the quality of life of their peoples, cannot continue much longer to hope that the developed countries would reverse their trade policies and lessen their stranglehold on the international trade system. We must learn to lessen our dependence on the developed countries and foster meaningful cooperation among the developing countries themselves within the context of the South-South dialogue. Such cooperation would not only strengthen our bargaining position vis-a-vis the developed countries, but would also tap previously unexplored and neglected potential markets for our goods.

Your Excellency,

7. Malaysia, together with her partners in the Association

of Southeast Asian Nations, ASEAN, has been striving to establish a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) in Southeast Asia, free from foreign meddling and interference. However, the unresolved conflict in Kampuchea, as a result of Vietnamese military intervention and occupation of that country, has posed a serious obstacle to the realisation of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality in the region. The conflict also poses a dangerous threat to the peace and stability of the region by bringing with it big-power involvement in Southeast Asia. Our paramount goal remains the withdrawal of all Vietnamese forces from Kampuchea, so that the Kampuchean people could freely determine their future in accordance with the declaration of the International Conference on Kampuchea, and other relevant resolutions of the United Nations. We firmly believe that the formation of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, under the Presidency of His Highness Prince Norodom Sihanouk, offers Vietnam a viable alternative to continued confrontation, and constitutes a positive step towards a peaceful and comprehensive resolution of the problem. In this regard, Malaysia notes with appreciation the Romanian Government's position in support of a comprehensive political solution of the Kampuchean problem, and in calling for the complete withdrawal of all foreign forces from Kampuchea.

Your Excellency,

8. One of the most important issues that faces the international community today is that of disarmament. Malaysia shares Romania's concern over the serious danger posed by the heightened arms race, particularly nuclear arms, that threatens the very existence of our civilisation. Of late, the arms race has become quite wild and dangerous. We earnestly hope that current negotiations on disarmament will be stepped up and eventually succeed. Malaysia believes that a wide ranging agreement on disarmament would contribute to the lessening of current tensions in the world. We believe also that the financial and human resources, freed from heavy military expenditure, could be more productively diverted to the economic development of countries, and contribute to the strengthening of the world economy.

9. Malaysia is also aware of the efforts by Romania and countries in Europe towards achieving security goals and cooperation in their continent through the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. We wish for the successful conclusion of the Madrid Meeting which would provide for confidence-building measures, and thus contribute to the relaxation of tension in Europe, and the rest of the world.

Your Excellency,

10. We have just hosted the United Nations Asian Conference on the Question of Palestine, an expression of our strong

support for the restitution of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to an independent state of their own, under the sole and legitimate leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the total Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab Territories, and the unconditional return of Jerusalem to Palestinian sovereignty. We are convinced that there can be no solution to the problem in West Asia for as long as the core of the crisis, which is the Palestinian question, remains unresolved.

11. War between Iran and Iraq, two members of the Non-Aligned Movement, which is still continuing, is causing deep anguish to all members of the Movement. To date, efforts by the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as by friendly countries concerned with the continuing conflict to seek a mutually acceptable solution, have been unsuccessful. We cannot, however, give up this quest for peace, more so that now a new problem has arisen out of the conflict.

12. This new problem which confronts the international community is the oil slick in the Gulf which threatens the world's environment. Damaged Iranian oil wells continue to spill thousands of barrels of oil a day into the sea. The fighting has prevented the capping of these oil wells and repairs to the damage. This spillage, if not effectively controlled, will extend beyond the Gulf area to neighbouring waters, causing permanent damage to marine life and ecology. It will take generations to overcome the effects of this disaster. The issue transcends the Iran-Iraq war, and must become the concern and responsibility of the entire international community. We must endeavour to persuade the international community to cooperate and assist in averting this grave threat.

13. Antarctica, the last unsettled frontier of mankind, has gained international interest. Malaysia firmly believes that Antarctica should not be the exclusive preserve of a handful of nations that have access to it. Rather, it should be the common heritage of mankind, used for peaceful purposes and not be made the object of international rivalry and discord. The time will come when modern technology will enable the exploitation of the abundant natural resources of Antarctica. It is our belief that these resources should be equitably shared and be of benefit to both rich as well as poor nations.

14. The full backing on the Antarctica issue given by the 101-member nations of the Non-Aligned Movement at their recent Summit in New Delhi, which urged that the matter be considered by the UN General Assembly at its 38th Session this year and that a comprehensive study be made on Antarctica, is heartening. I am confident that this will pave the way for an eventual universal framework of international cooperation on Antarctica. In this, Malaysia counts on the support of Romania and hopes that we will succeed in making Antarctica a common heritage of mankind.

Your Excellency,

15. May I say once again that it is a pleasure to be able to visit your beautiful country, and may I congratulate you on the excellent arrangements that have been laid down for this visit.

16. I am confident that the goodwill and close ties of friendship between us will contribute towards greater Malaysia-Romania cooperation for the mutual benefit of our peoples.

17. Now, I would like to invite Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen to join me in a toast to the continued good health, and success and happiness of His Excellency President Nicolae Ceausescu, His Excellency Mr. Constantin Descalescu, to the Government and people of the Socialist Republic of Romania, and to the close and enduring friendship between Malaysia and the Socialist Republic of Romania.