

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

EVENT: THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL DINNER HOSTED BY
HIS EXCELLENCY PRIME MINISTER KAMAL HASSAN ALY OF THE ARAB
REPUBLIC OF EGYPT, KAHERAH

VENUE: ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT, KAHERAH

DATE: 11 DEC 1984

TIME:

Your Excellency Prime Minister Kamal Hassan
Aly and Madam;
Excellencies;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Please allow me, on behalf of my wife and members of my delegation, to express my sincere appreciation for the very warm, friendly, and brotherly welcome that Your Excellency, and the Government and people of the Arab Republic of Egypt have extended to us on our arrival today in this ancient and historic city. We are also appreciative of the very generous hospitality that you have accorded us. I must say that we are deeply impressed by the excellent arrangements that you have very thoughtfully made to ensure that my delegation and I will have the fullest opportunity not only to discuss matters of common concern but also to feel the pulse and tempo of Egypt's industrial and cultural life.

2. As you know this is not my first visit to your great country as I had the pleasure of visiting Egypt in 1977. Nevertheless, I must say that I have looked forward to this visit to Egypt, a nation with a long and ancient history, a tradition as a centre of Islamic scholarship and a dynamic state in West Asia. Quite apart from this, I believe that a meeting between our two countries at the highest level would pave the way for greater cooperation. It therefore gives me great pleasure to be back in Egypt today.

3. Malaysia and Egypt have always enjoyed very close and cordial relations that even pre-dated the independence of Malaysia in 1957. Since the establishment of formal diplomatic ties, our relations have progressed in quantum leaps free of any real problems. There have been many exchanges of visit between our two countries so much so that our respective leaders and officials are no stranger to each other. Our two peoples also enjoy wide-ranging exchanges through educational, religious and trade and economic contacts.

4. Excellency, the most important challenge facing all developing countries is the need to enhance socio-economic

development. This is particularly so when we are faced with an international economic order that is manifestly unfair and biased against the developing countries. I know that Egypt has always been a great champion of the struggle to bring about a fundamental revision of the international economic system. But even the best of efforts cannot bring about this much needed reform unless there is some response on the part of the developed countries. Therefore if we cannot seek redress from the developed countries it is our bounden duty to search for other ways to fulfill the aspirations of our respective peoples for socio-economic progress.

5. Excellency, Malaysia and Egypt have in their own unique way chartered a path towards economic development. Perhaps the time has now come for us to jointly seek out new and wider avenues for economic cooperation so as to complement our respective economic development programmes in the spirit of South-South cooperation. I look forward to exploring this idea further with you and your officials.

6. Our two countries too have had a long tradition of contact in the field of education. Indeed, for many decades it has been the ambition of every aspiring Malaysian Islamic scholar to study at the world famous Al-Azhar University. Through scholarship at Al-Azhar and exposure to the Egyptian way of life, generations of Malaysian scholars have returned to Malaysia with rich experiences. Today Egypt plays host to several hundred Malaysian students. We are indeed appreciative of this.

7. As Your Excellency is no doubt aware, Malaysia, in its desire to contribute to the advancement of Islamic scholarship has established the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur with the support and assistance of our brothers in the Organisation of Islamic Conference. With the establishment of this new university, Malaysia will now be able to welcome students from Egypt as well.

8. Excellency, I am happy to note that the excellent cooperation that exists between our two countries extends from bilateral to international relations as well. Our two countries have cooperated actively at the United Nations and in the Non-Aligned Movement, in pursuit of peace and stability. Malaysia highly values the support you have given us with regard to the situation in Kampuchea where foreign forces have made a mockery of the high principles that has become the cornerstone of peaceful relations between neighbours. The support of a highly respected Non-Aligned nation that helped give the world the 'principles of peaceful co-existence' is a particular source of comfort for Malaysia and its partners in ASEAN in its quest to achieve lasting peace through the establishment of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality in Southeast Asia. In addition, we are appreciative that you share our concern with regard to Antarctica which must be recognised as the

common heritage of all mankind.

9. Malaysia has always been committed to Islamic solidarity, seeing in it our greatest strength in facing the many challenges that confront the Islamic Ummah. In this connection my Government is delighted to welcome Egypt's readmission into the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. It is our earnest hope that our Islamic Ummah will close ranks and strive still harder to resolve the problem of Palestine where our Palestinian brothers are valiantly struggling for justice against Zionism; to bring an end to the tragic war between Iran and Iraq; and to free Afghanistan from the yoke of a foreign invader so that it may take its rightful place in the Islamic Ummah. In my view, Egypt's readmission into the OIC is as timely as it is beneficial. I am convinced that Egypt can contribute much to the Organisation.

10. Finally, may I take this opportunity to wish Your Excellency, and Madam, and the people of Egypt continued good health, prosperity and happiness.
Thank you.