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SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE
THE PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA
DATO SERI DR. MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 8TH MEETING
OF THE ISLAMIC FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE,
TECHNOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT (IFSTAD)
SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL, IN KUCHING
ON MONDAY, 23RD. FEBRUARY, 1987
AT 10.30 A.M.

Bismillahir rahmanir rahim,

Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh,

On behalf of the Malaysian Government may I extend our warmest welcome to you to Malaysia. I consider it an honour to be invited to open this Eighth Meeting of the Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development and to be given this opportunity to share my views and thoughts with such a distinguished gathering of IFSTAD Scientific Council members from Islamic countries on this auspicious occasion.

2. Islam has never enjoined upon its followers to be ignorant and to fear knowledge. Indeed, the Quran asks us to study the stars and the environment and the animals created by Allah. Such a study cannot but be scientific in character even if it is also related to faith. Surely when Allah enjoins upon us to do something it must be for our own good. In the case of science and technology, we know that our failure to follow the injunctions of our religion has resulted in our present weakness and our being at the mercy of our enemies and those who do not wish us well. It is time that we realise this. It is time that we use the Quran as a guide and not just as a part of the performance of rituals. It is time that we emphasise the "do's" as much as the "don'ts". There are too many things that the Quran tells us to do which we ignore or deemphasise.

3. Islam is not at fault. It is not the cause of our backwardness or weakness. It is we and our incorrect interpretations and unbalanced teachings which are wrong. We must atone for our wrongs by correcting them. Insha-Allah, we will gain success as indeed the early followers of Islam succeeded in the first 100 years of the Hijrah. It is therefore the duty of IFSTAD not only to spread and promote scientific and technical knowledge but also to preach the correct teachings of Islam with regard to the search for knowledge and the need for science and technology.

4. It is said by some Muslims that we should not seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge. They deplore this approach because they feel it ~~as~~ western and secular. But have we not noticed that knowledge initially acquired without any specific benefit in mind, eventually proves to be useful and of benefit? Usually knowledge discovered by scientists is of no use to the scientists themselves. But to some others, that knowledge could be translated into something worthwhile. If the knowledge is applied for a bad purpose, it is not because the knowledge is bad. It is because evil people use it for their own ends. The knowledge should not be blamed or shunned.

5. The discoveries that western scientists have made, have rendered their countries rich and powerful. Today we are forced to pay high prices for the products derived from these discoveries, particularly in the field of defence. And because we have to do this we have become totally dependent on so-called western technology. We are helpless against them. Such is the advance that they have made that every aspect of our life is governed or at least influenced by their know-how. The food that we eat is produced using fertilizers devised by them, milled and transported and even cooked with something they invented or produced. The power and light we use owe everything to the inventions from their fertile minds. We move from place to place in vehicles using a variety of internal combustion engines designed by them. And the worst part of it all is that we are not even

capable in many instances to repair and maintain these products ourselves. We need them and the more we need them, the less is our independence.

6. We may blame and condemn them for their misuse of the power they gain through science and technology but we cannot say we are totally blameless. We have come to this state of dependence because we are still arguing about acquiring knowledge of science and technology, we are still talking about what is secular and what is not in our interminable discussions in airconditioned, electrically lighted and sound equipped conference halls of unsurpassed architectural beauty.

7. In the name of Islam, stop this fruitless polemics and get on with education, with the quest for knowledge and with research. If we don't like the results, as for example Darwin's Theory of the origin of the species, discard or disregard them and go on to others which are not against our belief. Do not condemn all knowledge simply because some areas of knowledge are bad or irreligious.

8. The present prolonged world wide economic recession and unsettling political trends coupled with the problems of drug abuse, unemployment, depressed commodity prices, fall in the oil price, increase in protectionism, and debt problem, has affected us in one way or another. Cooperation among Muslim countries in the acquisition of scientific and

technological know-how therefore seems to be more urgent than ever.

9. We must promote greater efforts to strengthen our cooperation in science and technology so as to minimise cost and share the benefits. Malaysia is fully committed and will continue to contribute to the development of Muslim countries in all spheres of common interest, including the field of science and technology. I wish to reaffirm Malaysia's support to IFSTAD's objectives, functions and activities in the field of science and technology. We strongly support such activities which is essential for the purpose of achieving rapid, coordinated and wide-ranging socio-economic development of the Muslim Ummah.

10. It is my hope that in this Meeting, the Council will be fully conscious of its responsibility and will be able to examine thoroughly the issues before it in a frank, sincere and pragmatic manner and with full conviction that our endeavours would be fruitful. In other words, the Council will have to find ways and means of implementing successfully the resolutions adopted by the Fifth Islamic Summit Conference in Kuwait, especially on scientific and technological cooperation.

11. We are also conscious of the rich historical experiences of the Muslim world in the fields of science and technology, and of the need to foster the distinctive

Islamic culture which combines the universal, spiritual and moral values of Islam with the world view of science. I believe that the intensification and strengthening of cooperation and collaboration in science and technology would contribute immensely towards solving many of the problems faced by the Ummah and the Islamic world as a whole.

12. In our efforts to promote and encourage research and development activities in the field of science and technology within an Islamic framework, I think it is appropriate for the Council at this Meeting to reassess and re-examine our capabilities and also to identify weaknesses. Certainly, lack of knowledge in the application of science and technology is one of them. Very often our attitude towards science is wrong. We think of it as alien and dangerous and we are therefore wary of using it. We regard research in science as anti-religion. Consequently we are not known for applying science to our daily life. All these misconceptions must be got rid off if we are to benefit from science. What is significant is not that we use science, but the purpose for which we use it.

13. We need to encourage and help each other in the fields of science and technology by first ensuring that all member states of IFSTAD, both individually and collectively, make it as a national policy to promote science and technology in

the formulation and implementation of their socio-economic plans.

14. This gathering shows the close cooperation among IFSTAD members. It is my hope that this meeting will be able to determine the financial resources needed so that the various scientific activities planned in the member countries can be carried out. Ways have to be found for raising funds for without them nothing can be implemented.

15. We, therefore, need to support the existing research institutions in the member states and assist those research activities already undertaken by Muslim scientists. On the other hand, specific areas of research should be identified and given priority to enable the creation of distinctive technologies indigenous to the Islamic world.

16. The Malaysian Government will continue to give strong and firm moral and political support to the OIC and its agencies. We are very much honoured to be chosen as the host for this council meeting. We look forward to working closely with fellow members from other Islamic countries under the ambit of the OIC in all fields.

17. I wish you all every success in your deliberations. I have now much pleasure in declaring the Eighth Meeting of the Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development Scientific Council officially open.

Wabillahi taufik walhidayah wassalamualaikum
warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

Prime Minister's Office,
Kuala Lumpur.