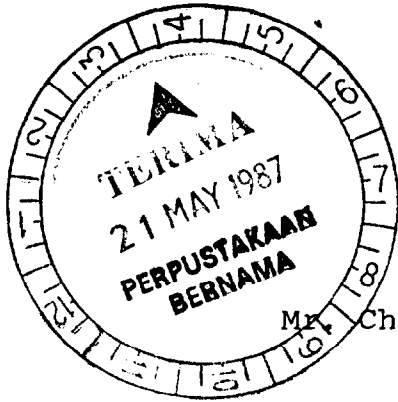


SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE THE
PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA
DATO SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD
AT THE FIFTH ISLAMIC SUMMIT
IN KUWAIT



Mr. Chairman,

May I, at the outset, express our deep appreciation and gratitude to the State of Kuwait for holding the Fifth Islamic Summit in this magnificent and hospitable city of Kuwait. Kuwait symbolises much of the strength and achievement of an advanced and progressive Islamic state, with which Malaysia is honoured to be in close and friendly relations. The choice of Kuwait as the venue of the Summit is very appropriate. The efficiency, hospitality and earnestness which have been shown here testify to the sincere commitment of Your Highness's government and the people of Kuwait towards the cause of Islam, the Ummah and Islamic solidarity.

2. On behalf of the Malaysian delegation, I would like to thank His Highness the Amir of Kuwait and His Highness's government for the warm hospitality and courtesy extended to us.

Mr. Chairman,

3. May I also extend to you, Your Highness, our sincere felicitations on your unanimous election as Chairman of this august gathering. Your election is testimony to the recognition and respect that you enjoy as an illustrious statesman of great experience and outstanding ability. Under your wise guidance, I am confident that this assembly will be able to complete its work successfully and with distinction. We assure you, Your Highness, that Malaysia would give its full support and cooperation towards the success of the Conference.

Mr. Chairman,

4. Our gathering is essentially different from meetings of other fora. Though many or even all of us belong to other groupings, our congregation in this manner every 3 years while representing a community of nations is also a meeting of the Islamic Ummah in consonance with the injunctions of our holy religion, Islam. While we are Kings, Presidents and Prime Ministers, we are all faithful servants of Allah, and in accordance with the teachings of the religion of Allah, we must try, despite our human frailties and

weaknesses, to fulfill our obligations to our faith and for the common good of the Islamic Ummah. The mantle of power that each of us wear as leaders in our own countries is but nothing before Allah if it is not used for the betterment of the Islamic world and the Ummah.

5. The Islamic World may be fragmented into numerous political and ethnic entities but the brotherhood of the Ummah must and do transcend these divisions. For good or for bad, the 900 million Muslim Ummah impacts upon the world at large. Our issues have become issues of world concern. Our wars have threatened the fabric of international peace. Whether we like it or not, we are as accountable to humanity as we are to the Ummah. In the eyes of Allah this is as it should be, for Muslims are as much the custodians of this world as are the others.

6. We can speak of the past glory of Islam, but really this is an admission of our present decline. The past is irrelevant and meaningless unless it teaches us the way out of our present failures. There must be lessons from history which can help us overcome our present problems; help us achieve greatness again.

Indeed the Hadith, the true traditions of the Prophet are a part of our history, meant to guide us. But we frequently ignore them in favour of our ambitions and passions.

7. In truth, the Muslim world to-day is anything but Muslim. We all declare our Faith of course, and we perform the rites and the rituals. But the spirit of Islam is missing. Unity and brotherhood is conspicuous by their absence. We proclaim the greatness of our Faith, and of Allah, the one God that we all worship and to Whom we are bound; we vow that we are all brothers, but we fight and plot endlessly and senselessly among ourselves. We say it is the enemies of Islam which have engineered the conflicts between us. We make no weapons ourselves. We buy them or we get them as gifts from those whose support we suspect. We know all these are wrong. We know that they are all against the teachings of Islam. But we continue to do it, to fight among ourselves with arms supplied by the enemies of our Faith. Are we morally justified when we blame these enemies of Islam for what we knowingly continue to do?.

8. Allah S.W.T. has enjoined upon us to ensure peace between our brothers. If two Muslims fight, we must stop the fight; we must arbitrate between the two. If one party refuses to accept the decision of the arbitrator, we must fight him. We know all these. Indeed, many of us can quote verse and chapter and innumerable hadith. But we view conflicts among us based on self-interest. And because we view the quarrels from such viewpoints, we frustrate the attempts to end the fight even though precious Muslim blood is being spilled and our enemies gloat over the carnage and the waste wrought by us.

9. Combatants may each have very valid reasons for the quarrels between them. There is no doubt that they sincerely believe in their righteousness. But righteousness does not justify senseless killing among people of our own Faith. Certainly when faced with a common and dangerous enemy, there can be no justification for any fight between ourselves.

10. We Muslims who are concerned over the senseless quarrels between our brothers do not look upon ourselves as judges of the rights and wrongs of either side. The first and foremost thing is to stop the fights and

the senseless killings. We can then sit down and apportion blame and compensate if we need to. As good practising Muslims, relieved of the pressures of an on-going carnage, we can calmly deliberate on the conflicts and eventually reach a consensus. Time would then be on our side, for delays in achieving consensus would not mean more slaughter of Muslims.

11. In the eyes of Allah S.W.T., all Muslims are equal. If they differ it is only in the degree of their submission to the will of Allah. In the affairs of the Muslim world, all Muslims have equal right to be concerned and to act. No particular race or nation or ethnic group has more right than others when something that affects the Faith and the well-being of Muslims is involved.

12. We are here as Muslims above all else. We cannot claim that other organisations have more right than us because of other loyalties. The Organisation of Islamic Conference should have no bias based on race or nation or geographical location or history. Some of us have been Muslims longer than others but that does not differentiate us. Certainly that cannot mean that we are better Muslims.

13. We deserve, therefore, to have our affairs and our problems given equal and fair treatment. Yet, we find that on the basis of Islamic universalism, some countries claim a right to disregard boundaries and sovereignty. However, these same countries object to the slightest violation of their own territories.

14. We would like to think that the Muslim Ummah forms just one single integrated community unseparated by boundaries or race or worldly ideologies. And indeed they do belong to one community when their faith and religion is threatened or besmirched. But otherwise there is a need to acknowledge that we do belong to separate countries and races and in matters that do not threaten the Ummah as a whole, we are independent. There should therefore be no interference in the purely domestic affairs of each other. There should be no subversion or instigation merely because we do not like the rulers of a particular Muslim country or their system.

15. We speak loudly of the conspiracies against Islam. We speak of the Jews, the Europeans and Americans, and the communists and how they subvert us and pit us one against the other. These are mostly true. Indeed we have seen how Muslim countries are

bombed and attacked because of fabricated charges. We are one with all our brothers in condemning this. But are we Muslims totally blameless? If we attract the hatred and detestation of the non-Muslims, is it not because oftentimes we have done wrong too?.

16. We have presented Islam as a rigid and fossilised religion. Although Islam had co-existed with Judaism and Christianity during the days of the Prophet and for centuries after that, we preach an uncompromising Islam that tolerates no other religion. Yet, we resent and complain against the strictures imposed on Muslims who are minorities in non-Muslim countries.

17. In the pursuit of our cause we employ methods that are against the mores of the times, mores that are not incompatible with Islam. True, our enemies have employed methods that are bestial and inhuman. But is an eye for an eye the only law for Muslims? Are there no provisions for release from this law? Are we not at all allowed to seek peace, at least with those who are not against us? Have we forgotten that the early Muslims sought refuge among the Christians?.

18. Ours is a peaceful, tolerant and fair religion. But because of our own doings which we claim are in the name of Islam, because those who know that these doings are wrong are unwilling to speak out, Islam has gotten a bad image.

19. Perhaps we should not care about what people think of us as long as we conform to the teachings of Islam, but does Islam's notion of honour permit us to carry out deeds which put us in such a bad light?. Even if we do not care for what others think, we should still care for what Islam considers right or wrong.

20. And what of the intrigues, murders and wars between Muslim sects?. How do these fit in with Islam as the religion of peace and brotherliness? How can Muslims directly or indirectly conspire and assist the most bitter enemies of Islam to kill fellow Muslims?. How can Muslims turn their guns on fellow Muslims when the real enemy is bent on killing both?.

Mr. Chairman,

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21. Islam is the perfect religion, perfected by Allah Himself. We do not expect the followers of Islam to be perfect in their religious practice but at least we should strive for perfection. We pray, we fast, we perform the Haj and we pay our zakat - but these are only rituals and are meaningless if we do them without sincere intention and regard for the values and behaviour expected of true Muslims.

22. The image of Islam has become bad because of our unIslamic behaviour. We are doing a disservice to our Faith. We are driving people away from Islam. We are creating more enemies for Islam. Is this what Allah wants us to do?.

23. When the OIC was formed we entertained great hopes that it would bring us together to resolve the differences and the other problems that we face. We saw hope that the bounty that Allah has given some of us will help alleviate somewhat the miseries of the poor among us. We saw the end of hunger and starvation and the untold miseries of those of us who wander through the arid deserts or the swamps and the jungles. In short we saw a better life for Muslims worldwide.

24. But all these hopes have been dashed. Instead we are bogged down by endless and fruitless attempts to end wars and bitter quarrels among our brothers. More of the Ummah are killed by Muslims, than are killed by non-Muslim enemies. The starving among us are helped not by us but by those whom we often label as our enemies. And when Muslims fight to defend their homeland against the atheists and unbelievers, it is the non-Muslims who risk their lives to provide medical treatment. Muslim doctors from other lands have not volunteered.

25. We have had some minor success in setting up institutions and agencies. We have now an Islamic News Agency, an Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development and a few others. But the work and the results of these bodies have been anything but spectacular. Even when times were extremely good, these agencies had to beg and scrounge for funds.

26. Some will say it is shameful to expose our own faults and incompetence. We should be polite and avoid unpleasant subjects. But is it any less shameful to openly fight against each other or to

deny help where help is most needed? Is it any less shameful for the world to know that while we support indirectly the Mujahiddeen in Afghanistan, non-Muslim doctors are actually risking their lives to tend to wounded freedom fighters?

27. Malaysia is of course as guilty as every Muslim country where some of these charges at least are concerned. If we are frank it is because we think that frankness has been missing for too long during our deliberations. As a result our conferences have not contributed much to the solution of the problems faced by the Muslim World, by the Ummah. We are still the oppressed of the world. We still have the Palestinian problem, the Lebanese problem, the Iraq/Iran problem, the Sahel problem, the numerous enmities between Muslim neighbours, the problem of Muslim minorities in Communist and non-Communist countries and a whole list of others. Every time we meet, these problems are not only still there but they have become worse.

28. I would like to appeal to my brothers to reduce the animosities between us. Problems such as we face cannot be resolved in one day or at one conference. But we should at least make some progress, formulate some workable strategies so that the next

time we meet the problems would have diminished somewhat. The involved parties should at least meet to talk over the problems. No matter how much we may think we are in the right, only Allah knows the absolute truth. It is finally Allah who will punish the guilty ones. If we know and we can, then we will. But our judgement may not necessarily be correct. What is certainly and obviously wrong is the lack of brotherhood between Muslims. What is most certainly wrong is the quarrels between us, the wars and the killings.

29. The greatest message of the Prophet was Peace, the end to feuds between tribes as they convert to Islam. We talk about Peace. We are all very clever at quoting the Quran and Hadith. We have a quotation for every occasion. But the fact is that we do not do what we preach.

30. Malaysia wishes to have no part in the fratricidal wars and quarrels among Muslims. We wish to be friends to all. We will not make judgements. We will only try to work for peace.

31. In other fields we would like to see Muslims and Muslim countries make progress. It is no good

saying that progress is worldly or Western or non-Islamic. The fact is that our attitude towards progress in industry and commerce, in science and technology and in education has rendered us so backward that we have become completely dependent upon people whose intentions towards us we question. We have in many instances to submit to their will because we are in no position to do otherwise. It is therefore important that we free ourselves from the stranglehold of those whose desire for authority tends to keep us backward. It is important that the Muslim Ummah get rid of the shackles that hold them back and strive to compete with the rest of the world in all fields.

32. Malaysia hopes that this conference will be fruitful for the Ummah and the Muslim nations. We pray for peace among Muslims and we pray for all those Muslims and Muslim nations struggling to be free from alien oppressors.

33. Malaysia will play its role as a Muslim nation and will continue to support the Organisation of Islamic Conference in its work towards Islamic unity and the well-being of the Ummah.