

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

EVENT: THE DINNER HOSTED IN HONOUR OF HIS EXCELLENCY
THE PRESIDENT OF VENEZUELA

VENUE: CARACAS

DATE: 04 AUG 1990

TIME:

His Excellency President Carlos Andres Perez,
and Madame Perez;
Excellencies;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.
May I first of all extend to you a very warm welcome.
It is a great honour for me and my wife to play host to Your
Excellency and Madame Perez.

2. These last few days have been exciting ones for me and my delegation. We have had very fruitful discussions on a whole range of issues affecting our bilateral relations. I am very pleased that there was a unanimity of views on all these issues. Yesterday afternoon we initiated several agreements which will put our relations on a firm footing and pave the way for an expansion in economic cooperation. Venezuela now becomes the first country in South America with which Malaysia has such extensive ties.

3. It is worth noting that what brought us together is the simple idea that countries of the South have much to offer each other in terms of economic cooperation and that such cooperation can make a meaningful contribution to our respective efforts at economic development.

4. Of course we have no illusions that intensified bilateral cooperation between our two countries is going to solve all our economic problems. Our small populations and limited markets mean that we have to also look further afield. However if we can forge such cooperative ties with others in the South, a network of trade and economic ties can be developed which collectively can quicken the pace of our development.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. It has been said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. We have already taken several impressive strides. The establishment of the South Commission was one. The Final Report which was launched here in Caracas, is the first independent assessment of the problems of the South by the South. It provides a clear perspective of how the South can promote its own economic growth while

integrating with the global economy. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Mwalimu Julius Nyerere and the other Commissioners for their dedication and outstanding contribution to the cause of South-South cooperation.

6. The Kuala Lumpur Summit of the Group of 15 Countries of the South was yet another landmark event. For the first time we went beyond declarations and adopted specific projects for implementation.

7. My visit to Venezuela, at the kind invitation of His Excellency President Perez, gave us the opportunity to make further advances by implementing, at the bilateral level, some of the projects adopted in Kuala Lumpur. In this sense the new framework for bilateral cooperation that has been established between Malaysia and Venezuela is important not just for Malaysia-Venezuela relations but also for the South as a whole.

8. I am aware of course that some countries in the South doubt the efficacy of South-South cooperation. They see it as little more than the usual rhetoric of the South. I am convinced however that when they begin to see that South-South cooperation can really bring tangible benefits in terms of increased trade, investments and technical cooperation, the momentum for South-South cooperation will increase. With non-tariff barriers going up in the North and economic assistance increasingly tied to political conditions, a greater reliance on the South will prove necessary. In the meantime, those of us who can agree on specific projects and programmes will push ahead. South-South cooperation must be built on individual cooperative endeavours between states and I think we have been able to accomplish that over these last few days.

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. Before I conclude, I want to thank His Excellency President Perez and Madame Perez for receiving us with such graciousness and warmth. I very much enjoyed our discussions and your commitment to South-South cooperation has been an encouragement to me. I also want to thank all the officials who have worked so hard to ensure that every detail of the visit was attended to. I know I speak for all members of my delegation when I say that this has truly been a memorable and fruitful visit for us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. May I now propose a toast to His Excellency the President of Venezuela and Madame Perez, to friendship and cooperation between Malaysia and Venezuela and to the future of the South.

