

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

EVENT: THE DINNER IN HONOUR OF THE HEADS OF DELEGATION
OF THE MEETING OF THE SUMMIT LEVEL GROUP FOR SOUTH-SOUTH
CONSULTATION AND COOPERATION

VENUE: SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR (K.L)

DATE: 03 JUN 1990

TIME:

Your Excellencies, The Heads of State and Heads of
Government;
Excellencies;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

We have come to the end of our meeting. It has been a very hectic three days. For me personally and for Malaysia, playing host to such a distinguished gathering of world leaders has been a great honour and privilege. It has also been a great learning experience for us. The cultural and linguistic diversities alone posed a number of challenges for us as organisers. I hope we have met some of these challenges to your satisfaction. The experience we have gained from organising this conference has convinced me more than ever that cultural, linguistic and even political and social differences are not the insurmountable barriers to cooperation that they are made out to be.

2. More importantly, I hope you will leave Malaysia with a sense of accomplishment. We have gathered together from all over the South, across many thousands of miles, with a resolve to begin a new process of South-South consultation and cooperation. In the intimacy of a somewhat smaller gathering, we have got to know one another better and have come to understand one another's aspirations and concerns. Although the problems we face may differ in both manner and gravity, we have felt the need for united and coordinated responses. This will provide an important basis on which we can carry forward the process of cooperation.

3. At Carcosa Seri Negara we have also explored the practical measures for cooperation. This was a major objective of our meeting. I believe we have all come away from the meeting with a clearer idea of the way ahead. All that remains is for us to infuse these ideas with the political will to enable them to become a reality. Judging from our discussions these last few days and indeed your very presence here, I would say that the political will is already very much in evidence.

4. To be sure there were, of course, areas of disagreement. I think such disagreements are natural and to be expected, particularly at any first meeting. We have different domestic needs and demands. We also have varied experiences that propel us to seek solutions in different ways. I have never subscribed to the view that there is only one way and only one solution to any problem. What is important however is that we have begun a process towards harmonizing our search for solutions and of seeking ways to bring to bear the collective weight of the South in support of policies which individually we could not hope to pursue with success.

5. This meeting, which we all hope will become a regular feature, will also oblige us to travel to other parts of the South. For most of us, the cities in the South would not normally be on our itinerary. The importance of pressing our case and seeking relief from the pressures we face with the North, in the North, leaves little time for visits to the South. It is my hope that these summit level meetings will now set the pattern for greater inter-South exchanges and dialogues. I think we have all sensed how much there is to be gained from expanding such contacts.

6. As Chairman, let me use this occasion to also reaffirm that we had no secret agenda or hidden motives in convening this meeting. Though we are leaders of nations in the South we did not meet as leaders of the South nor as its appointed spokesmen. As I said in my opening address, we are simply a group of like minded countries who came together to see whether we can begin a process towards tangible and mutually beneficial South-South cooperation. It is our hope that this process will be infectious and lead to a revitalization of that much sought after cooperation. Coming from all corners of the South and being individual members of nearly every political and economic grouping in the South from Asean to the Caribbean Basin Initiative, I think we are well placed to encourage this.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. Your stay in Malaysia has been all too short. You have probably spent more time inside conference rooms than outside. I wish there was time for me to show you more of Malaysia and introduce you to its people and cultures. I hope you will give me the opportunity of welcoming you back to Malaysia for a longer and more relaxing visit some day soon. Till then, I wish you a safe journey home. It has been a real pleasure having you here. We have benefited greatly by your wisdom and experience. I hope you have enjoyed your stay here as much as we have enjoyed hosting you. Thank you.