

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

EVENT: THE DINNER HOSTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF NAMIBIA HIS EXCELLENCY DR SAM NUJOMA

VENUE: IN WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

DATE: 17 NOV 1992

TIME:

Your Excellency Dr Sam Nujoma,
President of the Republic of Namibia,
Madame Nujoma
Excellencies;

Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first of all thank you, Mr President, for your kind words of welcome and the generous tribute paid to the government and the people of Malaysia. My wife and I and members of my delegation are indeed delighted to be here in this beautiful city of Windhoek, on our first visit to the Republic of Namibia. I would like to thank you for your kind invitation to visit your country and for the excellent arrangements made for this visit. That you are willing to receive us at this time while you are in the midst of a campaign for your local and regional elections bears testimony to the importance you attach to our bilateral relations and to the depth of your feelings of goodwill and friendship for Malaysia and its people.

2. It was only about two months ago that we had the privilege and honour of receiving you in Malaysia. During the visit we had a wide-ranging discussion on issues of common interest, in particular on ways and means of bringing our two countries closer together through cooperative endeavours for the mutual benefit of our peoples. We agreed to encourage trade and investment and to cooperate in manpower development. My visit to your country provides me with the opportunity of strengthening that spirit of mutual understanding, to reaffirm Malaysia's commitment to cooperate with Namibia and to further strengthen our relations. I look forward in the next few days not only to savour the delights of the many touristic attractions of your country but also to looking at close range the many opportunities for trade and investment in your country as well as the areas in which Malaysia could cooperate towards meeting Namibia's development needs.

3. Our two countries have already begun discussions on a number of agreements that would provide the necessary framework for enhanced cooperation. The signing of the Economic,

Scientific and Technical Cooperation Agreement at the end of my current visit to Namibia and other agreements such as the Trade Agreement and the Visa Abolition Agreement in the future would give impetus to our mutual desire to intensify relations between our two countries. While these agreements would facilitate such cooperation, the success of whatever economic ventures agreed to would be determined by the respective business sectors and how best they pursue the opportunities presented to them.

Mr. President,

4. It is for this reason that I have brought along with me a number of prominent Malaysian businessmen. They would be meeting their counterparts within the next few days. Their meetings and discussions should help expand existing cooperation and identify new areas for our mutual benefit. Indeed, tremendous possibilities exist for cooperation and joint ventures in areas such as tourism, construction, mining and fishing. I would like to assure you that Malaysia will do what it can to facilitate trade and ensure business cooperation with Namibia. Given our commitment to strengthening South-South Cooperation, I am confident that together, the government and the private sectors of both countries, would, before long, be able to construct a web of new relations and understanding across many sectors. Toward this end, there should be more frequent exchanges of visits by leaders of both countries and the business community so as to be better acquainted with one another.

Mr. President,

5. We have been most impressed by the policies of the government of Namibia under your wise leadership since your independence on 21 March 1990. You have been able to transform your country, whose society was once divided within itself, into a nation where all Namibians are able to live and work together in harmony and unity, regardless of their cultural and ethnic differences. We applaud the vision and statesmanship of the leaders of Namibia for having had the courage and magnanimity to embrace a policy of reconciliation. The wisdom of your decision is clear for all the world to see, contrasting sharply with the tragic events that unfold in those countries blighted by the curse of ethnic chauvinism. It is an undeniable truth that for multiracial countries like ours, if they are to enjoy peace and prosperity, their policies must be guided by pragmatism and the just consideration of competing demands of various groups, and a willingness to compromise and to make sacrifices for the larger interest of the nation.

Mr. President,

6. Namibians also have every reason to be proud of their democratic credentials. We have seen that since independence your democratic system of government has flourished with much vigour and vitality, proving to those who had cast doubts on your commitment to multiparty democracy that they were thoroughly mistaken. The credit must go to the leaders and the people of Namibia. The world will again be watching

with interest on how you go about your forthcoming nationwide elections for your local and regional councils. I believe this election will be the first to be conducted since independence and without the involvement of the UN or other international observers. We have no doubt, whatsoever, that you will come out with flying colours in the conduct of the elections.

7. I have been impressed with the current efforts undertaken by your government in the development of your country. Judging from the prudent policies of your government I am confident that the government of the Republic of Namibia will be able to successfully harness its human and natural resources in its endeavour to further enhance the country's prosperity. Malaysia stands ready to cooperate and help in our small way in these efforts and participate in areas in which Malaysia could play an effective role for our mutual benefit.

Mr. President,

8. As I have often reiterated, changes in the international, political and economic scenes leave developing countries, such as ours, in a vulnerable position. Our economies are heavily dependent upon external trade. Therefore the existence of a free and open global trading system is a prerequisite for our economic well-being. Although under the GATT we have managed to remove most tariffs the tendency for certain countries to introduce new non-tariff barriers, is worrisome. Such protectionism will seriously impede the development of a world trading system that is both free and fair.

9. I am on my way to the G-15 Summit Meeting to be held in Dakar, Senegal. It is my fervent hope that the Summit of the Group of 15 countries of the South would come up with new and concrete ideas in terms of increased trade, investment and technological cooperation among countries of the South. A greater reliance on South-South Trade and Cooperation would ease some of the problems faced by the countries of the South.

Mr President,

10. We are happy to note the winds of change sweeping Africa today. Many countries in Africa are now undergoing positive reforms. These augur well for the region and Africa as a whole as these countries can now settle down to tackling issues of development and economic upliftment of their people.

11. Sadly, however the lack of progress in South Africa with regard to the struggle of the black majority in their quest for majority rule in their own country stands as a stark contrast to the rays of hope emanating from the rest of Africa. The CODESA talks which was abruptly halted following the Boipatong massacre remain suspended. The longer the delay in the establishment of a democratically elected government in South Africa, the longer it will be for the

country to find its rightful place and re-assert its role in the international community of nations. It is in the interest of all parties in South Africa to cooperate and work closely together to revive the negotiating process under CODESA. It will enable the early creation of an interim mechanism for the eventual establishment of a democratic, non-racial and united South Africa.

Mr. President,

12. I take this opportunity once more, to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude for your kind hospitality and for receiving us with such warmth and friendship. We certainly look forward to the opportunity of meeting a cross section of the people of Namibia and take back with us many pleasant memories of our visit to Namibia.

Thank you.