

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

EVENT: DINNER HOSTED BY HE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SOUTH AFRICA

VENUE: PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA

DATE: 21 AUG 1995

TIME:

May I first of all thank you, Mr. Vice President, for your warm words of welcome to my wife and I and members of my delegation. We are indeed delighted to have the opportunity to visit your beautiful country. Some sixteen months ago, I was here for a very brief period, at a time when your country was in the midst of a great historic change. As with many other friends of South Africa, we are gratified that South Africans have finally put an end to the blight of apartheid and that this great country is moving towards building a new united, non-racial South Africa.

2. Malaysia and South Africa has had a long association, through historical and cultural ties and in recent decades, through our active support of your liberation struggle. These links have served to bring us closer together following the establishment of a democratic South Africa through free and fair elections in April 1994. As with other nations, we are elated at your return to the international community and readmission to the various multilateral organisations following the demise of apartheid. It is our belief that your country could contribute significantly to the cause of peace, economic development, and stability, not only in the African continent, but in the international community as a whole.

3. We note with satisfaction that since the establishment of the government of national unity, bilateral exchanges between our two countries have been on the upward trend. In fact, exchanges of visits at all levels have now developed its own momentum. The energy and momentum we have initiated at the government to government levels is being matched by contacts and cooperation between businessmen from our two countries. South Africa today has become one of the favourite destinations for Malaysian investors and tourists. The volume of trade between our two countries has seen significant increase over a period of just two years, with South Africa emerging as Malaysia's largest trading partner in the African continent. To further

accelerate these economic interactions between our private sectors, I have brought along with me Malaysian businessmen who are keen to explore investment and other business opportunities with their South African counterparts. It is my hope that their discussions over the next few days would help to identify areas of cooperation that would further enhance existing economic relations between our two countries.

4. Perhaps our best effort yet is through the proposed cooperation to provide affordable housing for the South African people. Discussions between our two sides have resulted in a dual track approach, with the national government undertaking a joint feasibility study on the provision of affordable housing for the whole country, and at the provincial level, with the provincial government of Gauteng, agreeing to undertake a pilot project to construct a thousand units of affordable housing by a joint-venture company of Malaysian and South African partners.

5. As we move towards more intensified exchange between our two countries, I wish to assure you that Malaysian participation in the South African economy will take full cognizant of your government's aspirations for affirmative action programme to help accelerate the participation of the disadvantaged communities in the country's economic activities. We are aware that your government has embarked upon a noble and just course through the Reconstruction and Development Programme. We have had a similar programme in Malaysia which has been relatively successful and about which we are ready to share our experiences.

6. In our ventures overseas, we are motivated by a desire to achieve a win-win situation. We desire shared prosperity, to contribute to the development of a prosperous new South Africa which will, in turn, contribute to the continuing growth of the Malaysian economy.

7. We are particularly impressed by your government's efforts and the initial success in achieving national reconciliation. The magnitude of this challenge can only be appreciated by another country with a similar multiracial make-up. Malaysia is one such country, for it too has a multiracial and multicultural population further polarised by economic disparities. Countries such as ours are constantly challenged to maintain national consensus-to reconcile the many divergent thrusts of our multiracial and multicultural communities. From our own experience we believe that there must be peace if there is to be stability. And there can be no economic growth and development if there is no peace and stability within the country. In this context, South Africa is fortunate to have a corps

of dedicated leaders, led by President Mandela, who recognise what peace and stability means to South Africa. The role that President Mandela has played in the past in bringing freedom and democracy to South Africa and his present efforts at consolidation will ensure that South Africa remains non-racial, united and a peaceful country.

8. May I once again thank you for your kind hospitality and for receiving us with such warmth and friendship. My wife and I look forward to visiting the many interesting places that South Africa is renowned for, and to meeting a cross section of your people. We will certainly take back with us many pleasant memories of our visit here to South Africa.