

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

EVENT: THE LUNCHEON HOSTED BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. JULIO MARIA SANGUINETTI

VENUE: COLONIA, URUGUAY

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TIME:

First of all, may I, Mr. President, thank you for your very kind words of welcome and the warm reception and gracious hospitality accorded to me and members of the Malaysian delegation. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you, the Government and the people of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay, for the very cordial reception and excellent hospitality extended to His Majesty the King of Malaysia who visited your country just two months ago.

2. My visit to your country, coming so soon after the visit of His Majesty the King, attests to the importance that Malaysia attaches to the Oriental Republic of Uruguay. I am struck not only by the natural beauty of your country and the warmth of its people, but also by the dynamism and vibrancy of Uruguay's economic growth and development. The Malaysian delegation has obtained a first-hand impression of the clear signs that make Uruguay what it is today, a thriving business, financial and service centre with tremendous potential to become a gateway to the Southern Cone.

3. We deeply appreciate the emphasis that is being accorded by the Government of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay to the Asia-Pacific Region, including Malaysia. Your decision to establish a resident diplomatic mission at Ambassadorial level in Kuala Lumpur in December 1994 as the only Uruguayan mission in South-east Asia, is a concrete manifestation of your country's desire to promote bilateral relations with Malaysia. It was only recently in January 1988 that we established diplomatic relations with each other. However, it is a matter of satisfaction that during this period, our bilateral relations have steadily developed.

4. Today, we have had the opportunity to exchange views on international issues of mutual concern, as well as on the developments taking place in our respective regions. Both countries have demonstrated our mutual commitment to expand and strengthen our bilateral relations. The two agreements that were concluded a few months ago on trade and investment guarantee would certainly provide the necessary framework for the promotion of bilateral trade and economic

cooperation. I am also happy to note the increase in the exchange of visits which have contributed to creating a greater awareness of each other as well as the opportunities that exist for expansion of our relations. In this regard, the private sector has an important and catalytic role to play in the promotion of concrete trade and economic relations. My Government has embarked on certain policies including privatisation and the Malaysia Incorporated concept which permit a useful interaction between the Government and private sector. This has helped us to achieve a good rate of economic growth averaging about 8.5 percent for the past 7 years. Having set in place the legal instruments, efforts now should be undertaken to realise the full potential for expansion of our bilateral economic ties. We stand ready to share our experiences in privatisation which I believe your government is also implementing.

5. Mr. President, Malaysia is following with keen interest the developments that are taking place in Latin America in particular the Southern Cone. We observe that MERCOSUR is making progress and taking shape. I am convinced that there are good prospects for Malaysia and its ASEAN partners to build a strategic and global partnership with MERCOSUR. ASEAN with a population of about 300 million and MERCOSUR with a combined population of 200 million can forge a useful partnership which can be of mutual benefit. There are many areas of interest which we can look into including trade, investment and tourism. We can benefit by sharing each other's experiences, technological advances and specialised skills in certain areas which can be promoted within the spirit of South-South Cooperation. Already Malaysia has established linkages with other South countries especially with member countries within the framework of G-15. These linkages which include the Bilateral Payments Arrangements and SITTEDEC or the South Investment Trade and Technology Centre have proven useful in generating greater bilateral trade as well as promoting awareness of each other. We have also taken initiatives to establish direct air links between Malaysia, Buenos Aires and Mexico City. There are possibilities of expansion of air routes to other countries in Latin America. I am confident that together both Malaysia and Uruguay can harness their energy and resources to promote greater trade and economic ties for the mutual benefit of the two countries and peoples.

6. In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to once again express my deepest gratitude for the excellent reception and hospitality which you have accorded us. I look forward to your visit to Malaysia in the not too distant future which would provide us yet another opportunity to continue our consultations on issues of mutual interest as well as the promotion of bilateral relations.

