

SPEECH BY: Dato Seri Dr. **Mahathir** Bin Mohamad
The Prime Minister

EVENT: At The Official Dinner In Honour Of H.E. Mr. Boro Botic And H.E.
Mr. Haris Silajzic, Bosnia And Herzegovina

VENUE: Sri Perdana

DATE: 11 Aug 1997

TIME: 8.30 P.M.

I am happy to welcome, on behalf of the Government of Malaysia, their Excellencies the two Co-Chairmen, their spouses and the members of the delegation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Malaysia. This visit by Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Malaysia is indeed of great significance as it signifies the achievement of national reconciliation, following the Dayton Peace Agreement. It is commendable that at least some common institutions are already functioning in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Malaysia feels particularly privileged to be hosting this first ever official visit to a foreign country by the leaders of the three major ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

2. Malaysia attaches utmost importance to the close relations that it is fostering with Bosnia and Herzegovina and the South East European region. We are linked by a strong bond of friendship and solidarity founded upon the shared commitment towards peace, freedom and justice. Bosnia and Herzegovina is of special interest to Malaysia as both our countries share a strong multi-ethnic and multi-cultural element.

3. Malaysia is conscious that Bosnia and Herzegovina is going through rather traumatic and difficult times as it puts together a government to defend its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and build upon the fragile peace that has been established. We recognise that time is needed to heal the horrors of some 54 months of fighting. We also recognise that while the Dayton Peace Accord is a good basis to start from it is not without its shortcomings. Nevertheless, we are optimistic that a genuine spirit of give-and-take can help to bring the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina together. The peace that has been achieved must be nurtured to become a genuine and durable one. It is important to ensure that the horrors and atrocities seen during the war are not repeated. It will not be easy to forget those horrors and they should not be forgotten if they are not to be repeated and if the culprits are to be punished. But at the same time it is necessary to look forward in order to rebuild and to meet future challenges.

4. From our own experience in Malaysia, we know that attention has always been paid to the delicate balance of the interests of all the peoples concerned. In our kind of society, the element of a healthy respect for others is vital. Tolerance, compromise, confidence-building, power-sharing, goodwill, cooperation and a good understanding of sensitivities are also important in our political culture. Those of us living in plural societies have very little choice but to live together, accommodate and respect each other and cooperate for the benefit of all. Malaysia has its own way of

managing and overcoming the problems of a plural society. We believe that there has to be judicious use of both legal and moral authority. In this, we will be only too happy to share our experience with others, including with all our brothers and sisters in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

5. While Malaysia remains committed to assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina where possible, it is also our desire to develop a genuine partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina. We recognise your strengths and potential. We are optimistic that with a true commitment towards peace among all parties concerned, the Bosnian economy can be rebuilt and developed, its political structures can be put in place properly and the social fabric strengthened. At the same time the reasonable aspiration of all the various groups can be adequately met and fulfilled. We wish to work with you as you strive towards the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement and the reconstruction of the country.

6. Malaysia has again committed a sum of US\$12 million for the 1997 reconstruction programme. The modalities for the disbursement of the funds and projects to be implemented are under discussion. In this regard we would like to see more active participation by the private sectors from both countries, not only in those projects identified by us but also in other projects including those funded by others. I am encouraged that a number of representatives of Bosnian companies have come with you on this visit. Hopefully they will be able to establish mutually beneficial working relations with their local counterparts here.

7. Malaysia can certainly be of help in certain areas including privatisation, trade and investment promotion and economic planning. We are willing to share our experience in the development of small and medium scale industries and participate in infrastructure development, and in the reconstruction of existing facilities and construction of new ones such as airports, highways and power plants. Some Malaysian firms also have expertise in projects identified under the auspices of the South East European Cooperative Initiative (SECI).

8. We are keen also to work with some other like-minded countries in Bosnia and Herzegovina and have indeed discussed the idea of launching tripartite or quadripartite efforts with a number of these countries. We feel that one way to accelerate the pace of reconstruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina is to encourage a synergy of interests among many countries in specific projects. Over the years, Malaysian entrepreneurs have gained experience and expertise in many fields. They can share these and their resources with Bosnian entrepreneurs not only in Bosnia but also in Malaysia and in other countries.

9. That the volume of trade between our two countries is still very small should not be cause for discouragement. There is scope for it to grow as Bosnia and Herzegovina build a broad industrial base Eased on its good technological know-how and highly skilled people. It is our hope that Bosnia and Herzegovina will become one of Malaysia's strategic partner in Southern Europe. We on the other hand can be an important conduit for your products to enter the wider East Asian market.

10. Malaysia's commitment towards the preservation and promotion of peace

in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains strong. The continued deployment of the Malaysian contingent serving with the Stabilisation Force (SFOR) and its precursor, IFOR is evidence of this commitment. Our troops will remain there as long as there is an international mandate for them to do so. The troops are there to nurture peace, not to serve sectional interests.

11. Malaysia shares the view of the international community that peace must be safeguarded in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There has to be respect for the law. Those who have been indicted as war criminals have to be made answerable for their actions. Their place right now is before the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague.

12. I do hope that this visit will be the beginning of a new chapter in a close and enduring friendship between our two countries. Our peoples, regardless of ethnic background, religion or culture can live together in peace and harmony. With that, I offer my sincere good wishes to Your Excellencies for your good health and success and your joint efforts to promote peace and reconstruction in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

FILE NAME: SP1108