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(PRIME MINISTER)

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TIME :

On behalf of the Asian Group, allow me at the outset to extend to his Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, our warmest congratulations on his unanimous election as chairman of the Summit. His election is testimony to the recognition and respect that he enjoys as an illustrious statesman of outstanding credibility. I am confident, under his wise guidance, this assembly will bring about not only fruitful discussions among us but also useful and concrete decisions that will reflect the spirit of friendship and the brotherhood of Muslims worldwide.

2. Allow me also, on behalf of the Asian Group including the Malaysian delegation, to record our appreciation to his Excellency President Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his dedication and contributions during his tenure as the chairman. Iran's role in the furtherance of Islamic causes is not new to us and we are most grateful for its untiring effort.

3. I am deeply honoured and touched by the warm welcome and wish to express my appreciation to His Highness, to the Government and the people of Qatar for the warm hospitality accorded to me and my delegation.

4. The Islamic Summit, a gathering of 56 Heads of State and Government, is being held in Doha against the backdrop of the deaths of so many valiant Palestinian people, including children, killed and maimed by Israeli bombs, mortars and bullets. They fought and died for their rights to freedom as well as their dignity. They also fought and died undeniably in defence of Islam.

5. Sadly, Muslim countries, representing more than a third of the membership of the United Nations, watch helplessly as Israel continues with impunity and arrogance to kill innocent Palestinians. Such is the dire state of Muslim countries that we are unable to respond effectively to the challenge posed by the cowardly acts of Israel. Not only are the Palestinians under assault, so are Muslim honour and unity.

6. The fate of the Palestinians is inextricably linked to the Muslims as a whole. The Palestinians are clearly living under occupation denied their rights and freedom. The assaults on the Palestinian are assaults on the Muslims, their dignity and honour. Muslim countries cannot just watch Israelis killing Palestinians with impunity. Surely we can do something about it?

7. The current development in the Middle East certainly calls for unity and solidarity within the Ummah. What is happening to the Palestinians could obviously happen to us also. Indeed in Yugoslavia and Chechnya and elsewhere it is happening. Must we wait until all of us are ground into the ground before we appreciate the need to act?

8. The OIC as an organisation, in particular the current Summit, can play a constructive role in championing the cause of the Palestinians and of Muslims everywhere. Our collective voice should be heard loud and clear in support of the Palestinians and there are obviously things which we can do to make our objections felt. We should remain steadfast in making no compromises on the status of Al Quds Al Sharif as the political and historical city of the Palestinian people and State. We should continue to address the cause of ensuring the return of the rest of the Occupied Palestinian and Arab territories including Syrian Golan. We should support all efforts including those made by the UN at achieving a peaceful settlement and at rescuing the peace process in the interest of regional peace and security. The Palestinian leadership too should be fully supported and assisted with whatever means possible.

9. I believe that the holding of this Summit is most opportune for us to collectively address this most important issue. Let us therefore not bicker among ourselves but instead approach it with a collective heart and mind. Let us truly act as an organisation of like-minded and religiously dedicated people. Let us shame those who loudly condemn imaginary oppression and yet do nothing when blatant violations of human rights take place before their very eyes. The Palestinians have struggled and suffered long enough. The time has come for them to take what is theirs with our support.

10. In advocating a fresh renewal of our support for the Palestinians, I am conscious of the complexities involved. Much as we would like to be of help the various obstacles outside our control remain. Israeli political, economic and military clout could not be simply ignored nor underestimated. Nor could we simply ignore US biases towards Israel that has helped shaped events and developments to the detriment of the Palestinians. It is important therefore that our ideals, zeal, and enthusiasm be tempered with reality and pragmatism. But given our seriousness of purpose and dedication to a united cause, I am confident that we

could help move in the right direction to attain our desired objectives.

11. The last time the world ushered in a new millennium, the Islamic civilisation was at its zenith. Today in the third millennium of the Christian era, sadly, Islamic civilisation is at its lowest ebb. The centres of learning and knowledge at the beginning of the second millennium were Damsyik, Baghdad, Cordoba and Samarkand. It is a known fact that Muslim countries control most of the world natural resources then and even today. Yet, Muslim countries are generally caught in their own quagmires of abject poverty and internal violence. There are more intra Muslim conflicts within Muslim countries and between Muslim countries, than there are between Muslims and their detractors.

12. Considering the sad state and calamity that has befallen the Muslim countries, the theme "peace and development" that has been selected for the Doha Summit is most appropriate and timely. The Summit is timely as it provides an occasion for us to take stock of the lessons and experiences of the past and to look forward to new ideas and new programmes to meet the developmental needs of the Ummah. Both these questions should be addressed openly and with honesty. The responsibility to address these issues is a collective one.

13. "Peace" is an integral ingredient of a Muslim's life. It appears in 53 verses in the holy Quran. "Peace" is the very word that is uttered by Muslims all over the world, from all walks of life, as it is the form of greeting of Muslims. It is therefore incumbent upon all Muslims to promote peace as a way of life in order to achieve development. Finding reasons for fighting each other and with others is not Islamic.

14. Peace and development are the twin challenges confronting the Ummah. They are complementary. Without one, there cannot be other. This means that the OIC, established to promote Islamic unity and cooperation should take concerted efforts to promote peace and development. The OIC must ensure that a new culture of peace and development is propagated among Member States, and Muslims generally.

15. The world has changed. It is increasingly interdependent. The world is driven by multifaceted interests - by a variety of actors who forge new alliances around shifting goal posts. Countries are redefining themselves; friends and foes are being reinvented and realigned, and everything is open to new interpretations and meaning and new instruments are being forged to realise new visions.

16. Given the new realities, the crucial question before us today is: Can OIC redefine or reinvent itself so as to

be effective and relevant in terms of its focus, structure and methodology of developing strategies to meet the new challenges of peace and development? Sooner or later the difficulties which will be faced by the OIC will compel it to redefine its structure and mechanism. It should redefine and act now rather than later. The Muslim ummah are entitled to expect the organisation to do this.

17. The difficulties encountered by the OIC in the past have for the most part, been due to, conflict of interests, ideology and the desire for hegemony by Member States themselves. We should forget all these. None of us are going to succeed in forcing the billion Muslims to be standardised according to its wish. We should accept our differences and focus instead on cooperation between us. The reform of the OIC, in line with the theme of this Summit, should be directed towards strengthening its role particularly in peace and development.

18. In order to ensure that the OIC renews both its relevance and its effectiveness, reform must be rooted in a new consensus among Governments on the role of the OIC, its core functions, its priorities, what it can do best, what it should do with others and what it should leave others to do.

19. I am keenly aware of the complexities of the task. Its success requires changes in structure and methodology of work. It must involve mutually reinforcing actions by Governments and by the Secretariat.

20. Economic globalisation is unquestionably the shape of the future. Its effects are universal and impact on all facets of life, including the political, economic and social landscape. Globalisation, a concept that is more Islamic than nation states, can be a powerful and dynamic force for strengthening Islamic cooperations and accelerating growth and development, but in its present form it poses many risks and challenges. Our task is to ensure that its benefits are spread to all and not merely to a privileged few. OIC has to make a serious effort to ensure that globalisation becomes an effective instrument for the development of all Muslim countries and the ummah.

21. Given the importance of trade in economic development, it is high time that OIC member countries enhance trade and economic cooperation among themselves, and break the trade barriers against each other. Easing of trade will create a big market comprising of Muslim countries, and this big market size will attract FDI. Properly managed FDI can contribute to our development. Similarly, a well-planned programme can be developed to promote Muslim Direct Investment (MDI) in the OIC member countries. After all most of the FDI go to the developed countries because of their ties with each other.

22. Under this plan, Muslim investors in capital-rich countries should be encouraged to invest in Muslim countries with know-how and technology but lacking in capital. Entrepreneurs in these two types of countries can also team up to invest in resource-rich Muslim countries which lack both capital and skills. Many of the products now imported into Muslim countries can be sourced from other Muslim countries without sacrificing quality or cost.

23. However, for FDI and MDI to be attracted and the industries to be established in the Muslim countries, there is a need for the investment environment to be attractive. Changing conditions already agreed upon when the investment was made for whatever reasons, including political, will discourage further investments. Internal problems should not be taken out of FDI or MDI.

24. Let us acknowledge that the IDB had been doing a good job in project financing. But more can be done by the IDB in countries with difficulties in gaining access to funds. The Islamic banking system can ensure that the banks maintain an active interest in the affairs of the enterprises.

25. Should the OIC redefine and refocus itself so as to be in keeping with the times, the Islamic Ummah over the next 20-30 years may be able to adjust to the globalised world and the Information Age. It is our bounden duty to ensure that this will happen. While we should never let the sufferings and oppression of the Palestinians and other Muslims be sidelined or forgotten, we must not let our long-term objectives be dimmed.

26. I am confident that the deliberations during this Summit will result in concrete outcomes that will set a new direction for the OIC to seek and implement peace and development in order to enable the Ummah to meet the new challenges of the 21st century of the Christian calendar. The OIC must assume a leading role in achieving this objective. Insya-Allah we will be able to put the ummah on the course of "self help" allowing it to solve its problems through mutual cooperation and support.

27. As a member of the OIC, Malaysia is keen to continue to strengthen the influence and to promote the activities and programmes of the organisation. We consider the triennial Islamic summit as an important forum for constructive deliberations for the development of the Ummah. It is in this connection that I, on behalf of the Government and people of Malaysia, would like to offer to host the Tenth Session of the Islamic Summit Conference in Kuala Lumpur in the year 2003. It is my sincere hope that this offer would meet with a favourable consideration of all members.

