

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

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REPUBLIC OF POLAND

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TIME:

Thank you so much for your kind words of welcome.

2. It is truly a delight to be finally here in Poland after so many postponements. Despite the cold weather, my delegation and I have encountered only warmth and friendship ever since we arrived in Poland. I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to the government of the Republic of Poland, and to you Mr. Prime Minister, for the friendly welcome and hospitality extended to me, my wife and to members of my delegation here in Warsaw.

3. Malaysia and Poland enjoy more than three decades of uninterrupted diplomatic relations. During these three decades we have seen Poland emerge from a centrally planned economy to embrace the free market system. The courage and resilience of the Polish people is well documented. You have endured invasion, occupation and domination. But through it all, with sheer determination you have succeeded in maintaining your spirits. The move towards greater democratisation started by the Solidarity Movement eventually brought down the Iron Curtain. The positive winds of change affected not only Poland but the whole region as well.

4. Poland's economic transformation bears testimony to the forward looking policies adopted by your government. You have succeeded in lowering inflation and embarking on successful privatisation programmes. Poland has entered into a Partnership for Peace with NATO and you are now a frontline state for entry into the European Union. We commend you for these achievements.

5. Our bilateral relations have also seen marked improvements. The volume of trade between our two countries grew last year despite the economic slowdown. However we have yet to realise our full potential. That is why I have included in my delegation a number of business people. It is my hope that they will be able to forge smart partnerships that can be mutually beneficial. Malaysia has much to offer Poland in terms of goods and services. Poland has well developed expertise in military technology and shipbuilding. I

am confident that our various talents can be complemented in the interests of both sides. Polish entrepreneurs and businessmen should look at Malaysia as their profit centre. The Malaysian economy is fundamentally strong and sound. The AFTA will come into being in 2004 and a market of over 500 million is open to you through Malaysia. We can be your springboard for the region. The centre of economic gravity is shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Let us together, seek ways to turn opportunities for greater growth and development into concrete projects.

6. Another promising area for our bilateral co-operation is in the tourism sector. People-to-people contacts through tourism is an important aspect of bilateral relations. We are happy to note that Malaysia is becoming quite a popular destination for Polish tourists. Last year an estimated 30,000 Poles visited Malaysia. We welcome more Polish tourists. Malaysia is truly Asia and we can promise you that the experience of visiting Malaysia will be unforgettable as well as rewarding.

7. Today we live in an extremely fragile world made worse by the events of September 11. The fight against terrorism while remaining a priority for all of us should not be expanded to include other agendas. Attempts are being made to extend the war in Afghanistan to other countries all in the name of fighting terrorism. Malaysia cannot support such actions. There is an urgent need to have a clear definition of terrorism. This would enable us to distinguish between a genuine freedom fighter and one who is motivated by a misplaced sense of injustice or grievance. We are also of the view that acts of terror are unjustified even if the cause is noble. There is also a need to look at the underlying causes of terrorism such as unremitting oppression. Malaysia believes that these issues can best be addressed through an International Conference on Terrorism.

8. We are also increasingly alarmed by the tendency in some quarters to portray terrorism as being the monopoly of a particular group or religion. We reject this view as being unhelpful and unhealthy. We must avoid stereotyping and profiling people according to their beliefs or ethnicity. It is important that reason prevails over emotion if we are to tackle this scourge of terrorism in a pragmatic manner.

9. I am convinced that relations between our two nations merit our sustained attention. We should strive to lift Malaysia-Polish relations to greater heights. To that end we should cooperate to maximise the advantages and build on the strong foundations laid thirty years ago between our two nations.

10. On that note, Excellency allow me to reiterate my grateful thanks to you for the very warm reception accorded to us. I am sure we will all leave Poland with many fond memories.