

**SPEECH BY YABHG TUN DR MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD AT THE
CONFERMENT OF THE HONORARY DOCTORATE OF HUMANITY FROM
LIMKOKWING UNIVERSITY OF CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY
AT LIMKOKWING UNIVERSITY OF CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY
ON 8 JUNE 2009 AT 10.00 AM**

“Peace the Salvation of Humanity”

1. Firstly I would like to thank Limkokwing University of Creative Technology for conferring on me the Honorary Doctorate of Humanity. I deem it a great honour.
2. Allow me to interpret Humanity for which I am being awarded a doctorate and is also the subject of my talk on this occasion.
3. The dictionary defines “Humanity” to mean “human race, human nature, humaneness, benevolence”, but when stated in the plural i.e. “humanities” refers to “subjects concerned with human culture”. Thus the study of the humanities is often interpreted as “the Arts” as different from the Sciences. If one is awarded a degree in the humanities then it would be about qualifying in the Arts.
4. But the award to me is a doctorate in Humanity.
5. And so I would like to regard this doctorate as being about the human race, human nature, humaneness, benevolence i.e humanity in the singular.
6. My talk entitled “Peace – the Salvation of Humanity” must therefore be about humanity and its salvation. If humanity is to be salvaged or saved then nothing is more important than the abolition of war.
7. We all know that through the ages Man had fought wars i.e. Man had resorted to killing each other in order to solve conflicts between them.
8. It seemed the natural and even the traditional thing to do. It was such a final solution. You have a problem with some tribe or nation and you simply wipe them out and your problem with them, whatever that may be would be solved.
9. And so we see wars i.e. the massive and deliberate killings of people since the beginning of time. It was not a crime. It was and has always been entirely legal and acceptable, even glorified. Countries remember the killer with pride and they erect statues to the leader of the killers.
10. Perhaps it was glorious. The primitive people of yesteryear knew nothing better. They didn’t have diplomats and ambassadors. They knew nothing about negotiating. They had no means of legal redress, of resorting to a court of law. Killing the enemy was their only option and they enjoyed this option, enjoyed killing.

11. Besides, in those days the damage was not much. A few villages burnt down and a few hundred people slaughtered. The victors strut around and the losers cringe for fear of being killed, which of course was the right of the victors.

12. Usually the fight was carried out by professional soldiers from both sides. The ordinary people were not directly involved. They would survive unless the conquerors were particularly nasty and decided to massacre everyone. Otherwise the victors would just lord it over the vanquished and the whole episode would be regarded as over.

13. But with the passage of time wars became more and more brutal as well-trained killers, otherwise called soldiers, kill their enemies by the thousands and more. To win, new strategies and new weapons were invented. The killing power of these weapons increased all the time. About anything that is invented for the peaceful use of men would be developed into weapons for killing people for achieving victory over the enemy.

14. Motorcars became armoured cars; ships were converted into battleships bristling with guns and now with missiles, airplanes transformed into bombers and combat aircrafts. From dropping bricks on the top of enemy soldiers, the bombers went on to drop explosives and bombs and finally to dropping atomic bombs which killed 100,000 people, men, women and children at one blow. The bombers would return home as heroes boasting of the number of people they had killed. They don't feel any guilt or remorse. Nor do their commanders and leaders.

15. Fighter aircrafts gain in speed and are armed with long range rockets and guided missiles. But the speed kept increasing. Now supersonic, dogfights became quite impossible. Guided missiles now seek their targets through the heat of aircraft engines and other homing devices. But still there is this need to increase the capacity to kill and destroy without endangering the pilots. So now we are seeing a whole new range of weapon systems based on the UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle). Radio control has become so sophisticated that even the powerful fighters and bombers can be pilotless and operated from the ground miles away. The attackers have to risk their lives not at all.

16. Still there is room for improving the ways of killing people. Space stations will not only monitor everything that is on the ground but would be able to fire missiles at any place on earth and also direct lethal rays so as to kill people. It must be uncomfortable and hair-raising to think that someone is looking at you from outer space and might decide to blow you up any time.

17. But all these weapons cannot surpass the destructiveness and killing power of the nuclear arsenal in the possession of the United States, Russia and other nuclear powers. The US alone has 10,000 nuclear warheads sufficient to literally wipe out the whole human race and render this planet totally uninhabitable. The nuclear powers have decided that only they are

entitled to destroy this planet. No one else may have even a fraction of their capacity.

18. So there is a nuclear non-proliferation treaty and a ban against the testing of nuclear weapons. North Korea and Iran are said to be developing nuclear weapons and there is much concern that they may succeed. But imagine what would happen to these two countries if they ever use their nuclear weapons. The United States and the others would act to destroy their countries completely with their nuclear missiles and bombs. The US knows this and Iran and North Korea know this. The latter would only use their nuclear weapons if they have a death wish, if they want to disappear from this world.

19. What is really threatening the world is not Iran or North Korea. What is threatening the world is the US with its massive arsenal of nuclear weapons. Already the United States is using depleted uranium in their bombs and missiles. And many who have been targeted are suffering from radiation diseases. Now the US is developing so-called safe precision nuclear weapons which will kill only selected people. Then there are special nuclear bombs designed to pierce through the earth to great depths so that those hiding even in deep bunkers will not be safe.

20. How can we expect countries not to make their nuclear weapons if nuclear powers keep their huge armory of nuclear warheads and go on developing, testing and producing new nuclear weapons?

21. The fact is that the destructiveness of modern weapons has reached a level that endangers the whole human race. The capability of wiping out the human race is real and is already in the hands of some countries. It is a frightening prospect for the peoples of the world.

22. War today is totally destructive. In the past the fight was between professional armies. They do battle on selected battlefields. The people killed were mostly the soldiers, whose job it was to kill and be killed. They were capable of defending themselves and attacking their attackers.

23. Today whole countries have become battlefields. The targets are no longer the soldiers, the combatants. The whole population, men, women, children, the old, the sick are all the targets. They dismiss the killing of non-combatants by calling these people "collaterals" – but they are people, whatever you may call them. They are the ones who bear the brunt of war today, they are the ones who get killed with no capacity to defend themselves or to fight.

24. To kill these people and destroy their homes, their towns and cities simply because you have a conflict with the country and maybe in the case of Iraq, a conflict with the leader, is totally primitive and inhuman. That it is part of war is no excuse. It used to be that attacking civilians was against the rule of war. But no longer. Anyone is fair target, even the babies in the cradle. If

you cannot get rid of your bad Government or bad leader, we will do it for you. Sorry if we have to kill you also.

25. In any society, killing people is a crime, is murder deserving of the most severe punishment including the death penalty.

26. Why do we consider killing people a crime, a serious crime? Imagine a society where a member is allowed to kill anyone or be killed by anyone when a dispute arises between them. In such a society the members would live in fear. There would be no peace or stability and the economy would not grow. There would be no law and order – the rule of law would not be possible. There would be no justice because the strong and the skillful would certainly be able to kill and the weak would always be at their mercy.

27. Now let us consider the international community. In many ways it resembles a human society except that the members are made up of nations instead of people. But whereas in a human society killing each other is not allowed, is considered a crime, in the International community the members i.e. the nations are allowed to fight each other and to destroy each other's country. The victims are still the same. They are people and the properties belong to people. Yet the killings and the destruction are permitted, are in fact legal.

28. There is something contradictory here. Whether it is in war or peace the people are the ones who get killed. The only difference is in the numbers. The killings in human society at peace hardly ever involve more than one person. Yet the killing of this one person is regarded as such a serious crime that the killer is labelled a murderer, is arrested, tried in a court of law and if found guilty is often sentenced to death.

29. In war the killings involve more people, thousands or even hundreds of thousands. That is the only difference – the numbers. The killers know what they are doing, know that by shooting, or firing missiles and dropping bombs they are killing people. The whole world knows this, know who ordered the killings. and who does the killings. But no one is regarded as guilty.

30. Of course if the country concerned loses the war then the victors would set up a court to try the leaders. But the crime is not the killing of people but some abuses of vague codes of behaviour which are supposed to govern the conduct of war. That the victors may have also broken those codes and indeed are guilty of mass murder through carpet bombings and atom bombs are ignored. The victor whatever they may have done in order to achieve victory are regarded as innocent, in fact conferred the right to try and punish the vanquished.

31. The equivalent in human society would be when the killer is tried by a court made up of the relatives and friends of the victim. Can justice be expected of such a court? Yet effectively this is what we see in the International war crimes trials.

32. The victor is always right in wars. This becomes an incentive for countries to arm themselves to the teeth in order to avoid defeat. Since all countries will be doing that, a perpetual arms race is inevitable.

33. Today trillions of dollars are being spent by the countries of the world on weapons. Even the poorest countries have to spend large sums of money on weapons. Whether there is a threat of war or not countries must buy weapons, must arm themselves.

34. The trade in weapons has become a very big segment of world trade. The arms merchants from the rich weapons producing countries go all over the world to promote the sale of their weapons. They play on the fears and the pride of the countries which make up their market.

35. To persuade a country to buy they would point out the threat posed by the neighbours who already have superior weapons. Even if the neighbours pose no threat, the country can be persuaded to buy because the military officers would feel very unhappy if their weapons are inferior to those of their neighbours.

36. And so the poor countries neglected the real needs of their people in order to buy costly weapons. They look good in parades celebrating events. But most of the weapons owned by the countries of the world have never been used they way they are designed to be used. They were and are not fighting any war.

37. But the weapons keep on being upgraded. After a few years the arms merchants, usually backed by their Governments, would come back to offer the upgraded versions. The same persuasion is used, namely possible armed threat from neighbours or the need for the military to keep up with the neighbours.

38. This constant upgrading and rearming would go on for decades with the weapons never being used in anger. The poor countries become poorer and the arms traders and the rich producer of weapons recoup their investments in producing weapons.

39. Even the rich countries suffer from this misallocation of funds. Being rich their scale of spending on weapons is far greater, running into trillions of dollars. Considering that 90% of these weapons will not be used, the trillions spent on research, development, testing, setting up plants to manufacture, material procurement etc and finally production in large numbers would be wasted. Yet even the rich countries can make better use of the money, for health facilities, for example, research into the cure for cancer, AIDS etc etc. Certainly they can do a lot for the poor in the world.

40. All this is because we regard killing people as a way to solve disputes between the nations of the world. Yet let us see how effective is the killing of people in solving the conflicts between nations in the world.

41. In the two World Wars 90 million people were killed and the destruction amounted to trillions of dollars. These wars were supposed to be the wars to

end all wars. Henceforth all disputes between nations would be resolved through institutions set up by an international organization.

42. The first World War saw the setting up of the League of Nations. But no sooner was it formed when the most powerful victor in the war decided not to back it. The League of nations was a non-starter.

43. The victors then imposed a very repressive treaty (the Treaty of Versailles) on the vanquished. The resentment of the Germans was so strong that very quickly they prepared themselves for another war.

44. The Second World War was the biggest war in the history of the world, the mother of all wars. Seventy million people were killed and whole continents devastated.

45. Out of this horror emerged the United Nations which would ensure that there would be a forum to address the conflicts between nations, so that no more wars would be fought.

46. But as we all know it did not put an end to war. We see wars in Korea, Vietnam, Rwanda and Burundi, Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq and Grenada.

47. True the wars are not as big as the World Wars but for the people who have been killed and are waiting to be killed the size of the war does not matter. It is still war. It is still about killing them. It is still about the destruction of their homes, their towns and their cities and their countries.

48. Effectively the United Nations has failed to stop war. And why has it failed? It has failed because once again the powerful countries rejected the idea of ending conflicts through non-violent ways. The powerful countries basically reject the idea of Rule of International Law which they so vehemently insist that all countries must accept. The powerful and presumably civilized countries still want to kill people in furtherance of their dominance.

49. Frankly I don't think the human community, which even today accepts the killings and destruction in war as legitimate is rationale. We really cannot regard the mass killings in war as more rationale than the killing in peace time. If we consider ourselves as civilized then we cannot accept the killings in war just as we cannot accept the killings in any human society in peace. The killings in war must be regarded as a crime just as the killings in peace are crimes. The people who launch the war which results in killings must be regarded as criminals, must be punished as criminals.

50. War truly is very primitive. To settle conflicts through war is as good as saying that it is legitimate for anyone to kill anyone else because he has a problem with that person. A society that permits this must be regarded as primitive and uncivilized. A world which permits this must be considered as equally primitive and uncivilized.

51. It is time we change our ideas about war, about killing people, destroying countries as a solution to disputes and conflicts.

52. Just as we abandoned slavery as wrong in a civilized human society, we must abolish war as wrong in the world we consider to be civilized today. Surely war i.e. the mass slaughter of people is far worse than slavery. If we cannot accept slavery then we must not accept war.

53. We must make war a crime. We must make the warmongers, the people who launch wars on others as criminals.

54. It takes time to change the values of humankind. But the first step in making this change must begin today. Now.

55. You are young people belonging to 200 different countries. You must initiate the change. Only if war is criminalized and stopped will there be peace and prosperity in the world. You must therefore vehemently insist that Peace is the Salvation of Humanity, is your salvation and that of your children and grand children. This is your struggle.
