

**SPEECH BY TUN DR MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD
AT BERJAYA HOTEL AND RESORT, LANGKAWI, KEDAH
ON WAKAF, ZAKAT AND SADAKAH ON SATURDAY, 29 OCTOBER 2011**

1. Firstly I would like to thank the organisers for this invitation to give a talk on Wakaf, Zakat and Sadakah.
2. This is a conference of Muslims, the followers of Islam, the religion that is not just a faith or a ritual, but is a way of life, "Ad Din". The way of life of Muslims is prescribed in the Quran and the verified hadith. We will find guidance from the religion of Islam regarding every aspect of the way we should live. And that includes the way we manage our wealth for ourself, our family and for the community.
3. The Quran states that Allah has raised some members in the community of Muslims above others in terms of authority, power and wealth. That is the prerogative of Allah s.w.t. This is not to favour some above the others. For those He has raised He prescribes deeds which involves sharing what they are endorsed with to reduce the burdens of the less fortunate.
4. Thus the rich and those better endowed are required to pay tithes (zakat), to give charitable donations (sadakah) and to endow a part of their wealth for the good of the Ummah, (Wakaf). This way the less fortunate and the community as a whole will also benefit from the authority, the power and the wealth of those He has raised. With this there will be fairness, justice, stability and peace within the community of Muslims.
5. What Allah has prescribed is as relevant and as necessary today as it was centuries ago. Today we should see the Muslim Ummah everywhere enjoying a good quality of life in a conflict free society. Today we should see the brotherhood of Islam manifest itself in everyday life. Today, with all the wealth endowed by Allah on the Muslims, we should see prosperity among Muslims and among their countries.
6. Unfortunately we don't. We see poverty amidst the wealth of the Muslim people and their countries. We see extreme disparities between rich and poor Muslims and between rich and poor Muslim countries. We see turmoil within Muslim communities and Muslim countries. We see backwardness and illiteracy and we see injustice and incompetency in the administration and policies of Muslim countries.
7. Why are these things so? The answer is simple. By and large Muslims do not live the way of life as prescribed by Islam. While they may make the

vow of faith in the oneness of Allah and that Muhammad is his Prophet, while they may pray, fast and perform the Hajj, in the injunction to pay zakat, to be charitable and to endow their communities they are lagging behind.

8. While a Muslim individual must pay zakat, a mere 2.5 per cent of his wealth, we see no attempt to apply zakat to nations. Surely if a rich Muslim individual should pay zakat, a rich country should also pay zakat. This is because the Muslims all belong to the Ummah, the Muslim community. The Muslim community knows no boundaries. They are one; they are of one community.

9. What Allah has endowed, it is to the community of Muslims as a whole. The nation-states came later, following the trend in the western world. With the creation of nation states, often by the foreign non-Muslim colonisers, the Ummah has become divided, and divided very deeply. Such is the division between states that they often disregard the brotherhood of Islam; they often fight and destroy each other. And certainly in terms of wealth endowed by Allah s.w.t. to the Ummah, the division into states has enriched some greatly and deprived others completely.

10. Having said this I must hasten to record that many of the rich Muslim states have extended monetary help to the poorer states, even to the poor in other states. This is of course in accord with the tenets of Islam, the way of life of Islam. But there is a need to put this disbursement of wealth among the Ummah on a more firm footing. For without doubt the bounty of Allah is so great that, fairly distributed, no Muslim or Muslim countries need to be poor.

11. I am not suggesting that all the zakat money from all the rich countries should be given to helping the poor countries or the poor in other countries. But I do suggest that a minute fraction should be allocated by all states for this purpose.

12. Even a fraction of the 2.5 per cent zakat that is collected by all countries would be very substantial. It would go a long way to relieve the pain and sufferings of the poor. It would go a long way towards developing the poor Muslim countries so that with prosperity they too can pay to the zakat fund.

13. It is not enough to provide relief for disasters. It is equally important to build schools and universities, to educate and train the people so they may earn a living and overcome their poverty and need no longer depend on material help to live the life of the Muslim. One must never forget that poverty undermines faith. And the way to overcome poverty is to give the Muslims the environment, the skills and the knowledge to earn a living.

14. But beyond that we see many Muslim countries are so poor that they lack the amenities, the basic elements, to sustain a good life. They lack water supply, electricity, roads, medical and health services, proper housing and even proper clothing.

15. It is shameful to see the squalor in the slums of many Muslim countries, to see children scavenging in rubbish heaps for food, to see them drinking dirty water, naked and hardly ever bathing. Yet we know that in Islam cleanliness of body and proper dress are required during prayers.

16. Perhaps we can send some food and second-hand clothing for these children and their parents. But how long will such aid last? Even if we give repeatedly their living conditions would not improve.

17. What should be done is to literally develop their country, create jobs for them through investment in labour intensive industries. But no one would invest if the infrastructure of the country is poorly developed or non-existent.

18. The only way is to help provide the countries with at least minimal infrastructure in terms of water-supply and electricity, paved roads, schools and training facilities and medical services.

19. This will cost a lot of money, But I believe if a fund is set up from a small fraction of the zakat paid in the richer countries, there will be sufficient money for all these infrastructure to be built over a period of time.

20. The Quran enjoins upon us as individuals to pay zakat and for the zakat money to be distributed to eight Asnaf i.e. eight categories of people. In most of the rich countries the eight Asnaf does not exist anymore. Even if they do the amount of zakat money collected would far exceed their needs.

21. But if we consider ourselves as the Ummah, the community of Muslims using the zakat for the poor in other countries cannot be considered as breaching the categories of the people entitled to zakat funds.

22. Can we spend zakat funds on the infrastructure which I have listed? If they are for alleviating the poverty and the wretchedness of the people in poor Muslim countries I do not think we would be going against the injunctions of Islam. The aid would indirect but it would be more permanent in terms of contribution to the well-being of the people in poor countries. The ulamas can study this question and come up with a fatwa.

23. For the purpose of collecting and administering this zakat fund, a special institution should be set up, manned by personnel from the contributing countries. Proper accounting, transparency and rules and regulations can ensure that there will be no abuse. The contributing countries and the Ummah would be kept informed as to how the source of the money and how it is disbursed.

24. I am speaking only about zakat because zakat is a social tax. It is meant to bring relief to the less fortunate members of the Muslim society. But Islam also advocates charity. Sadakah is at the discretion of the donor. There are indeed many cases locally and internationally, which deserves charity.

25. There are any number of disasters both natural and man made in Muslim countries which deserves help. The more sadakah by the rich the better it would be not only for the deserving case but for the image of Islam.

26. As for the wakaf, it is a practise which should be promoted and encouraged in the Muslim world. Some of the rich countries have already been supporting the building of mosques and universities all over the world. With better information on the needs, more would benefit from wakaf.

27. Muslims are enjoined to be charitable. They should not confine their largesse to Muslims only. We know that non-Muslims not only extend aid but the Medicines sans Frontieres (Doctors without Borders) actually risk their lives to help the sick and the wounded without discriminating on the basis of religion. We Muslims should not always confine our charity to our co-religionists only. We should also help humanity at large when the need arises.

28. One knows that the rich non-Muslim countries have committed themselves to giving 0.7 per cent of their GDP as aid to developing countries under the Overseas Development Aid scheme.

29. Should we set up an institute to disburse zakat money to overcome poverty among Muslim people and Muslim countries, we would not only be demonstrating what the way of life of Islam is like, but we would also be helping to change the image of Islam as painted by the Western media. We would be able to prove that Islam and the Islamic way of life is the best for humanity, Insha'allah.

30. We should begin this noble Islamic effort with Malaysia pledging one eighth of its zakat for the year 2011 to the fund.
