

By : DATUK SERI SYED HAMID ALBAR
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**Title : ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE IMPACT OF
GLOBALISATION ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS
AND THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT**

His Excellency Justice Bhagwati,

Special Advisor of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum and good morning,

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to Kuala Lumpur and in particular to this Workshop, jointly organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

2. The timing is certainly propitious. The 57th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (CHR) has only recently concluded its work. Undoubtedly, those of you who have attended the Session will help enrich our discussion on this topical issue. Undoubtedly too, experts and delegates from the region participating in this Workshop will contribute, from their perspective, to the further understanding of the impact of globalisation on the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the right to development – the theme of this Workshop.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Plainly the greatest challenge confronting us today is the challenges of globalisation, accelerated by technological developments and liberalisation pressures. The changes they brought have impacted on our daily existence as individuals and as nation states, and in the process, are altering the very basis of the interaction between individuals and the community they live in as well as between nations. Policy making capacity of countries is being eroded while the benefits of the globalisation have been unequally distributed to the detriment of developing countries.

4. It is clear that the majority of developing countries are not fully ready to face the challenges of globalisation, let alone take advantage of it, especially as the globalisation agenda is being set by the developed countries and powerful multinational corporations and financial actors. As a result of the unequal distribution

of resources, power and the decision-making process between the rich and the poor, globalisation is hurting too many while helping too few. This imbalance will undermine social structures, national governments and ultimately international system and regime.

5. It is thus in all our interest to rethink the principles and systems governing our existence and interactions. At the same time we must consider and pursue policy options that would reverse the negative aspects of globalisation and promote a form that effectively addresses the growing inequalities of opportunities and wealth between developed and developing countries.
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. Malaysia is pleased to co-host this Workshop with the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights. We are confident that this Workshop would contribute in a significant way to on-going efforts in developing appropriate formula to promote the full enjoyment of all human rights, in a balanced and comprehensive manner. The focus of this Workshop, on the right to development will undoubtedly enable us to view rights from the developmental perspectives in terms of individuals and nation states.

7. The international community, fully cognisant of these rights, has adopted various Resolutions at the United Nations and at other fora on this matter. In varying degrees, international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have also recognised the link between the process of globalisation and the fulfilment of all human rights. Nonetheless, it is time that we move beyond mere rhetoric and seek to address the downside of globalisation. In this regard, it would be useful for the Workshop to examine the issue from four perspectives – namely the contents of globalisation, the effects, the challenges and finally, the approaches.

8. As far as the contents, it could be said that it is an on-going political, economic, social and cultural process that breaks down national barriers or borders and which could impinge on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights as well as the right to development.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. Today's debate on globalisation seem to be often centred on its effects. It will be thus most important we take this into consideration in the context of promoting and protecting human rights.

10. The Asian financial crisis can be cited as an example of the adverse effects of globalisation. The consequence of the financial integration of the economies of developing countries to the global financial system has been the increasingly important influence of international financial markets on the financial stability, particularly that of developing countries. International financial flows, especially

short-term capital flows manipulated by big players and speculators, had destabilised regional economies during the financial crisis. Even today, they continue to pose a threat.

11. The region has suffered incalculable cost in human, political, economic and social context. As a consequence too, states that, which sought external financial assistance, saw their independent policy making capacity limited by international financial institutions. These countries have been compelled to accept the conditionalities imposed although they are detrimental to national well-being and development. It is indeed regrettable that while governments are endeavouring to protect and promote the economic, social and cultural rights of their peoples and the right to development, they are encountering obstacles placed in their path.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. In this globalised era there has been an increasing reliance, if not belief, in the virtues of giving market forces their full reign, which according to its advocates will inevitably bring beneficial results in context of growth and development. We are also witnessing the enhancement of the role of non-state actors, including transnational corporations, relative to that of the states. Indeed, some of these non-state actors have control over more resources than many national governments while technological developments have made it difficult for governments to control the spread of information. Unfortunately, however, the negative implications of such developments on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development have not been given the emphasis, it deserves.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. The discussions on contents, effects will not be sufficient without looking at the main challenges posed by globalisation. Since globalisation is a process which we cannot stop, the other way out is to make the globalisation process more equitable. For the present, the benefits of globalisation are very unevenly shared. The developed countries are enjoying the most benefits of globalisation while many of the developing countries are suffering the disruptive consequences on their societies and economies.

14. In the second instance, is to make globalisation more inclusive. Developing countries have to be helped to get "plugged" into the process.

15. In the third instance, we have to consider how to address the challenge of re-energising international co-operation for development so that it again attains its rightful place at the top of the agenda of the international community.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

16. In the formulation of suitable approaches in addressing the problems arising from globalisation, in the context of the enjoyment of human rights, Malaysia believes that it is important we reaffirm the primary role that nation state plays in the promoting and protecting the human rights of its nationals, in particular the policies that states should be allowed to pursue in the promotion of economic, social and cultural right as well as the right to development. As the responses to the financial crisis had demonstrated, if Malaysia has not pursued its own national measures but instead followed the IMF prescriptions, Malaysia's economy would not have recovered so swiftly while its future generation would be saddled with massive debt servicing.

17. Equally important, we need to adopt a holistic approach in treating all human rights in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing and with the same emphasis as affirmed by the 1993 Vienna Conference. Based on this holistic approach, I am pleased to note that one of the subjects you would discuss in this Workshop is the "implementation of the right to development in the context of globalisation".

18. It is important for us to recognise and address the multiplicity and interconnectedness of factors that cause violations of economic, social and cultural rights. In this respect, strengthening international economic and social co-operation would go a long way in helping countries meet the many challenges involved in protection and promotion of human rights.

19. Last but not least, it is essential that concerted efforts be urgently exerted to develop more appropriate and democratic global governance to address systemic issues that impinge negatively on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

20. While globalisation holds out the promise of prosperity, it brings forth severe challenges for the developing countries. Presently, this promise of prosperity has not filtered down to the vast majority of the world's population, thus adversely affecting the enjoyment of their economic, social and cultural rights as well as the right to development. Any effort to make globalisation more inclusive and equitable must include policies and measures at the global level, which corresponds to the need of the developing countries, formulated and implemented with their effective participation. The international community must go beyond rhetoric and instead provide concrete proposals to create a form of globalisation that promotes the well being of mankind.

21. Distinguished Delegates, I am confident that given your expertise and the comprehensive yet practicable agenda before you, your deliberations would lead to meaningful recommendations on appropriate strategies in addressing the negative impact of globalisation while maximising its beneficial effects on human rights. I wish you success in your deliberations.

22. It is with great pleasure for me to officially declare open this Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on the Impact of Globalisation on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Rights to Development.

Thank you.