

**By : DATUK SERI SYED HAMID ALBAR**  
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**Title : OPENING SPEECH AT THE INAUGURAL JOINT COMMISSION MEETING BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND SUDAN**

His Excellency  
Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail

Distinguished members of the  
Sudanese delegation

Ladies and Gentlemen

Bismillahirrahmanirahim

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi  
Wabarakatuh

Good Morning,

At the outset, allow me to convey my sincere thanks and appreciation to His Excellency, Dr. Mustafa Osman Ismail, Foreign Minister and the Government of the Republic of Sudan for hosting this Inaugural Joint Commission Meeting between Malaysia and Sudan and for the hospitality extended to me and members of my delegation.

2. I would like also to take this opportunity to congratulate Your Excellency and the Government of Sudan for the excellent organization and successful conclusion of the 29th Islamic Conference of Foreign Affairs.

Your Excellency,

3. The establishment of the Joint Commission marks another milestone in our relations. It is indeed timely, given the substantial developments in our bilateral ties. I am confident that this JCM would serve as an effective vehicle for us to promote mutually beneficial cooperation between our two countries.

Your Excellency,

4. Malaysia is pleased with the development of relations between our two countries. Significant progress has been achieved following the opening of Sudan's resident mission in Kuala Lumpur in June 1991 and our resident mission in Khartoum in September 1999. In this regard, I wish to place on record the vital role played by our

respective leaders in shaping the course of our bilateral relations. We acknowledge in particular the visit of President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir to Malaysia in 1991 and Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir's return visit to Sudan in May 1998.

5. Malaysia is also pleased to see the regular exchange of visits taking place at the Ministerial and Senior Official levels between our two countries. I hope such visits would continue to be promoted by both countries. I take note that to date Malaysia and Sudan have signed 8 bilateral agreements. Three new MOUs are expected to be signed at this inaugural JCM. I am confident that all these agreements would provide the necessary framework for the further strengthening of our relations in all fields.

Your Excellency,

6. Malaysia is encouraged to see the growing bilateral economic ties with Petronas currently taking the lead in oil exploration and production. We are pleased to see Petronas not only engaging in its core activities but also undertaking various socio-economic projects in Sudan for the benefit of the local community. Other Malaysian companies have also ventured into Sudan in the fields of hotel industry, construction, air services and engineering services. Some members of the Malaysian private sector are now negotiating or undertaking feasibility studies to undertake various development projects in Sudan such as power generation and transportation. Petronas too, at the request of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, had commissioned a consultancy firm to conduct a feasibility study on the development of the Nile river basin in Sudan, with the objective of developing the Nile into a bustling economic waterway in the region.

7. I take note that our bilateral trade is relatively small at USD 19.7 million in 2001. We are confident however that it could be further expanded and diversified considering the potentials that exist. It is imperative that both sides create a conducive business environment so as to enhance bilateral trade. We noted the existence of some impediments and hope that this meeting would be able to discuss them in the interest of promoting trade between the two countries.

8. In particular we would like to highlight the problem faced in the export of our palm oil and palm olein to Sudan where the tariff imposed is very high and is further subjected to a high custom duties and sales tax. Through this Joint Commission, Malaysia would like to request the Sudanese government to review the tariff, custom duties and sales tax on palm oil and palm olein so as to make them competitive in the Sudanese market, which I am confident, would contribute to the expansion of our bilateral trade.

Your Excellency,

9. Malaysia is pleased to note that 193 officials have participated successfully in various short and long term courses at Malaysia's training institutions and universities since 1983 under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme

(MTCP). We welcome more Sudanese to do so by taking advantage of the opportunities that exist.

10. I am glad to mention here that, in addition to the regular MTCP courses, the International Institute of Public Policy and Management of Malaysia (INPUMA) will be conducting a special course on "Effective Capacity Building" for 15 senior Sudanese officials in Malaysia next month from 14 – 28 July 2002 with the purpose of sharing and imparting knowledge in areas of public management and governance in Malaysia. I hope such a course will be useful to the Sudanese participants concerned.

Your Excellency,

11. At the regional and international levels, I am glad to note that Malaysia and Sudan share similar views on various global political and economic issues such as Palestine, terrorism and globalization.

12. Malaysia is also happy to work closely with Sudan for the cause of Islam and in support of the ummah at the regional and international fora including the OIC. As you may recall, Malaysia had in April hosted the Extraordinary Session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism. Your Excellency's presence and personal contribution to the Conference had enriched the debates and discussions on the issue. Malaysia looks forward to working closely with Sudan in its capacity as Chairman of the 29th ICFM particularly with regard to pursuing follow up actions including the setting up of the proposed 13 member Ministerial Committee to combat terrorism.

13. The September 11 attacks have served as a wake up call for us to identify and address the root causes of terrorism, without which the international community cannot hope to eliminate this scourge. Similarly we must recognize that there must be an internationally accepted definition of terrorism to ensure consistency and constancy in the fight against terrorism.

Your Excellency,

14. The agenda before us today covers a wide range of issues for our consideration including tourism, health, information, multimedia development, education, agriculture, culture and public service reform. I am confident that our deliberations on these issues would be productive and fruitful and, Insha-Allah, achieve the desired results for our mutual benefit.

15. On that note, Excellency, let me conclude by once again thanking you and the Government of the Republic of Sudan for hosting this Inaugural Joint Commission Meeting.

Thank you.