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"POST NAM SUMMIT: WHAT NEXT?"

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to ASLI for inviting me to address this Forum on a subject of particular importance to Malaysia. The Government is pleased and gratified at the tremendous support shown by the Malaysian public for the XIII NAM Summit, held in Kuala Lumpur recently. I am personally very pleased to note that while before the Summit, NAM was not very well-known to most Malaysians, except those who followed international affairs closely, there is now greater awareness of what NAM is, what it stands for and its role in international relations. If I could say so, with all due modesty, it is the general impression of the membership of NAM that the KL NAM Summit was one of the best organized and managed of all NAM conferences for a long time. The challenge is to galvanise the political will of member states so as to transform words into action, and to demonstrate to the membership that their confidence in us to effectively lead the Movement is not misplaced.

2. You have posed the question: after the successful NAM Summit, "what next?" You have also challenged me to respond to the following additional questions: -

- How successful is NAM in the eyes of the international community?
- Will NAM bring any changes to the world or just a mere "talk show"?
- Will there be a permanent secretariat for NAM in the near future?
- How relevant is NAM in tackling the issues of the current international conflict in Iraq?

3. These are very pertinent questions. The same questions, among others, have been asked by NAM members themselves these past several years. Indeed, they are the questions that we in Wisma Putra had raised among ourselves when we considered the desirability of Malaysia assuming the chairmanship of NAM, following overtures from the members of the Movement. I am not sure, given the time constraint, I would be able to respond adequately to these questions. However, I shall try to do so to the best of my ability within the time allotted to me this morning.

4. Yes, by any yard-stick, we had organized a very successful Summit, but we will be the first to admit that a Summit, however well-organised, is not an end in itself. The real challenge is yet to come as we go about fulfilling the onerous responsibility of the chairman of this huge Movement of 116 countries. Expectations from members are high, while their support may not be all that solid or forthcoming! This is the state of affairs within NAM which is usually long in words but unfortunately short in action. The Iraq crisis has added a further dimension to the challenge that we face as chairman of NAM.

5. So, "what next?" you have asked. Clearly, as the chief flag-bearer and spokesman of NAM, we will have to speak out, as effectively as we can, in the name of the Movement on issues of importance to our members. We will have to ensure that NAM is not sidelined but is heard and listened to, and its views sought and respected as we represent the overwhelming numbers of the international community. We are also expected to use our leadership to effectively push forward the revitalization process of NAM, as enjoined by the Kuala Lumpur Declaration.

6. During its chairmanship, South Africa had initiated the process of critical self-examination of the Movement and its role in the contemporary world we live in. The two brain-storming sessions it organized at Zimbali, near Durban, and at Cape Town proved to be especially productive and had yielded many useful ideas which were further examined at the ministerial interactive sessions during the Kuala Lumpur Summit. Many of these ideas and suggestions have formed the substance of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, which will provide the basis of our actions in the Movement during the period of Malaysia's chairmanship, and possibly beyond.

7. The Kuala Lumpur Declaration reaffirmed the NAM's commitment to the ideals, principles and purposes of the Movement, provided guidelines for its further revitalization and proposed some concrete measures to be undertaken, covering both structural and substantive aspects of the revitalization exercise.

8. There is common consensus within NAM that to revitalize the Movement, we will have to revamp and make more efficient its method of work and decision-making processes. An immediate measure would be to enhance the role and authority of the NAM Chair, through the strengthening of the NAM Troika and an appropriate back-up system of support. We will work closely with the other members of the Troika – South Africa and Cuba – in order to respond promptly to major developments on the international scene on behalf of the Movement. We have in fact been doing this on the issue of Iraq when the Troika issued a statement expressing the Movement's strong opposition to the unilateral military action taken against Iraq. To assist the Chair of NAM to respond promptly to international developments of critical importance to the Movement, we are also considering the possibility of establishing an open-ended consultative committee, possibly in New York.

9. We intend to interact more closely with the NAM Caucus in the Security Council, comprising NAM members of the Security Council, so as to strengthen cooperation and coordination among these members as well as between them and the larger membership of the Movement. We hope by having regular interaction with the Caucus, we would contribute towards strengthening the unity of the NAM members of the Council so as to enhance their clout within the Council. We would encourage them to take important initiatives on behalf of the Movement in the Council, on issues affecting international peace and security as, particularly in Palestine and Iraq. As Chairman, we will use that office to remind the NAM Council Members of their obligation to support and advance the positions of the Movement in the Council, while, of course, respecting their position as Council members in their own right. I am convinced that had there been more unity and common purpose among the NAM members of the Council they would have been able to take concrete initiatives to curb the excesses of the Israeli authorities on the Palestinian population, thereby

facilitating to finding a solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Indeed, had there been such unity and cohesion among the NAM members of the Council, the Iraq issue would have been handled in a different manner than it is today. I dare say a united and cohesive NAM within the Security Council would have paved the way to the early lifting of comprehensive sanctions on the Iraqi people, instead of an open season of war and carnage against Iraq that we are witnessing right now!

10. In fact, as part of the revamping of NAM, we will be auditing the effectiveness or otherwise of the various committees and working groups of the NAM so that the effective ones could be made more effective while others could be removed, and new ones created, whenever necessary. I believe such a renewal exercise is vital for the wellbeing of any healthy organ or organization.

11. Under Malaysia's chairmanship we are also looking at the possibility of utilizing more fully and effectively the role of the Foreign Ministers, who usually meet and make set statements on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly. We found the interactive session of the Foreign Ministers, initiated by South Africa in New York last year, and repeated at the recent pre-Summit meeting of the Foreign Ministers in Kuala Lumpur, extremely useful not only for the purpose of consensus-building within the NAM, but also in enhancing a sense of unity and togetherness among the member states of the Movement. We hope to build further on this mechanism. We will also consider the feasibility of organizing similar interactive sessions among NAM's Heads of State and Government, perhaps through informal mechanisms like the Langkawi process of informal dialogues. Clearly, to be effective as chairman of the Movement we must be willing to make the necessary investments in both time and resources.

12. We will make every effort to expand and deepen South-South cooperation, both in the context of regional cooperation, as well as between the regional organizations of the South. The challenge is to try to change old mindsets for new ones, establish new patterns of trade, and to encourage the belief that the development of the South does not entirely depend on the North's aid and trade but that it could also benefit from increased trade among countries of the South. We will therefore strongly encourage and support on-going dialogues and cooperation between regional organizations, such as between ASEAN and other regional and sub-regional organizations in other parts of the world. We also hope to enrich South-South cooperation by tapping into the resources of our institutions and eminent personalities and by a pooling of our available resources in our efforts to be less dependent on the North. For this purpose we need to identify, among others, centres of excellence in the South that can contribute to the process.

13. However, this does not mean turning our backs on our partners in the North, who will remain important but hopefully less dominant in our lives. If we strategise well and wisely, our partnerships with them will be on an even-handed footing, more equal and less of a patron-client or donor-donee relationship. We hope to forge a more interactive relationship with the Group of industrialised countries, the G-8, whose decisions impact enormously on the developing countries. Through such contacts we would be able to promote the views and positions of the developing South before the G-8 make decisions that affect the fates of the peoples of the

South. In this regard, we are appreciative of the initiative of President Chirac, in his capacity as Chair of G-8, to invite our Prime Minister to attend the upcoming important meeting in Paris between leaders of the G-8 and those of a number of developing in June this year. Our Prime Minister would certainly use that occasion to bring to the attention of the G-8 leaders the concerns of the developing countries, in his capacity as chairman of the NAM.

14. Now, let me try to respond to the other thought-provoking questions that have been posed. On whether NAM would bring any changes to the world or would just be a mere "talk show", I think it is important to see the Movement in the context of global developments since demise of the "Cold War". Undeniably, with the end of the East-West conflict, NAM began to lose its influence or clout in international affairs. Indeed, many began to question its relevance and even mocked its name. It therefore cannot be denied that for a long time since the end of the Cold War NAM meetings were indeed "talk shows" where leaders met and make statements, with little follow-up actions and largely ignored by the major world players. It was very much a "voice in wilderness". Yet the Movement refused to die and disappear because, despite the end of the super-power rivalry, the reasons for the founding of the Movement were still there and have not been fully addressed. However, over time, it soon became obvious to everyone that unless NAM countries go beyond playing lip-service to their common cause, its relevance and very existence would be questioned. In deciding to assume the Chair of the Movement, Malaysia had clearly rejected the notion that NAM is dead or dying, as we would not spent so much money and effort to hold the Summit if we believed the Movement was terminally ill. You would have noted that rather than officiating at the burial of NAM in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, as host had pushed for the adoption of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, as an important blue-print for the continued revitalization of the Movement under our stewardship.

15. As to the question of a permanent secretariat for NAM, this has been the subject of much discussion within NAM over the years but opinions remain divided to this day. Some NAM members believe that the establishment of a permanent Secretariat would contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the Movement. However, others are of the view that there is no need for a permanent secretariat as NAM is a Movement, not an organization. In spearheading the revitalisation of NAM, we have decided to set up our own national NAM "secretariat", located at Wisma Putra, which will service the Chair of NAM in coordinating the positions and activities of the Movement, and undertaking the necessary follow-up work in the context of its revitalization. Perhaps, our national secretariat could be the fore-runner of a permanent NAM secretariat in the future, when members could see the advantages of a more focused and systematic coordination through a secretariat than the ad-hoc approach of the past.

16. On the question of the relevance of NAM in tackling the issue of Iraq, let me say up-front that this issue is a very complex and complicated one. It relates not only to the unity and cohesion of NAM members but also to the unity of the UN Security Council, which is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. It would be obvious by now that NAM does not speak with one voice on the issue of Iraq; while the vast majority of its members is opposed to the illegal war being waged by the so-called "coalition of the willing" against Iraq, some others are not.

Indeed, a few are openly or not so openly supportive of it, for their own reasons. There is also a lack of unity and cohesion among the NAM members serving on the Security Council thereby limiting the capacity of NAM to take initiative in the Council. We however succeeded in getting the Council to convene an open debate of the Security Council on the issue. Regrettably, it was just a debate without any resolution because of the threat of a US/UK veto, including a lack of a consensus among NAM members on a draft resolution that could be tabled.

17. There have been discussions among some NAM members on the idea of initiating a so-called "Uniting for Peace" resolution in the General Assembly, which could conceivably be taken in a situation when the Council is paralysed, as it is now. While such a resolution would not be legally binding on UN members, as that of a Security Council resolution, it would nevertheless have a strong moral and political force on members of the international community to respect it. By virtue of its numerical strength, the NAM could conceivably take this initiative as what is required for this purpose would be the request by a majority of the members of the General Assembly. A request by the Chair of NAM, representing almost two-thirds of the members of the General Assembly, could open the way for the convening of a General Assembly session to consider the "Uniting for Peace" resolution. Unfortunately, there is no consensus within NAM on this approach, due to strong opposition from a number of Arab countries, among others, who support the US action in Iraq.

18. As Chairman of NAM, we are at the moment engaged in consultations with the Arab League and members of the Movement on the idea of requesting for the convening of a resumed session of the 57th General Assembly on the situation in Iraq. We have yet to find a consensus on calling for the session and on the possible outcome of such a session.

19. Certainly, on the critical issue of Iraq, we shall make every effort to bring about the unity of NAM members and to take whatever initiative that is necessary in order to stop the war and relieve the sufferings of the Iraqi people. We will also press for the pre-eminent role of the United Nations in any post-war reconstruction of Iraq and will strongly oppose the dominant role of the US. Malaysia would also strongly urge NAM member states to contribute effectively to the reconstruction of Iraq, rather than leaving it entirely in the hands of the developed countries.

20. Also, in the wake of the Iraq debacle in the Council, we shall make every effort to galvanise the NAM to manifest strong support for the multilateral process, with the United Nations at its core, as the best guarantee in safeguarding the interests of the small countries that make up the bulk of the membership of NAM and the UN.

21. In conclusion, let me say that in facing up to the challenges of our chairmanship of the NAM, we are doing so with our eyes wide open. We are not oblivious to the fact that NAM is a Movement comprising members with disparate interests and loyalties, hence the difficulty of holding its members together. But this would not deter us from doing our level best to fulfill the mandate that has been given to us at the KL Summit. Our failure will be not for lack of trying!