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Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would, firstly, like to welcome all of you to Kuala Lumpur and to extend to you the warm greetings and best wishes of the Government and people of Malaysia. Kuala Lumpur is indeed privileged and honoured to play host to this XIII Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, the second largest grouping of developing countries outside of the United Nations.

2. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Republic of South Africa, in particular, His Excellency President Thabo Mbeki, Minister Zuma and her very able officials, for the outstanding way they have led our Movement these past four and a half years. As the Chairmanship of our Movement changes hands, I am confident that our strong sense of collective values, aspirations and solidarity, forged over a period of more than forty years, as well as our abiding commitment to the Bandung Principles that inspired the founding of NAM, will ensure the continued cohesion and relevance of our Movement in global affairs.

3. For Malaysia, as we assume the chairmanship of the NAM for the next three years, we hope to be worthy of the confidence that member states have reposed in us. I am confident that with your understanding and support, the goals that we will be setting for ourselves at this Summit Meeting can be realised, despite the many challenges which lie ahead.

Political, Economic and Social Issues Facing the NAM

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. You have before you the arduous but important task of preparing for the Summit which will include the main task of finalizing the Final Document which will be presented to our leaders. Needless to say, your deliberations will set the tone for the Summit and will assist our leaders to arrive at important decisions pertaining to the future direction of our Movement.

5. At this critical juncture in the world's history and faced with the many challenges ahead of us, our Movement cannot afford to fail and to let down the expectations of its members. As one of the two preeminent groupings of developing countries, our Movement must continue to present a united and cohesive front to the international community at large. NAM must continue to speak out and to play its role as the champion of the weak, the powerless and the disenfranchised against the seemingly overwhelming dominance of the rich and powerful.

6. The challenges facing us, in fulfilling this role, are indeed enormous. Given the globalised world in which we live, characterised by increasing interdependence and complexity in international relations, these challenges are now even more intricate and potentially more divisive than in the past. This is true, I believe, in all spheres of human activity, be they political, economic or cultural.

7. In the realm of politics, many of the assumptions of the past about the rules of the game of international relations have changed. From the rigid rules of the Cold War, which saw the two rival blocs thrusting and parrying at each other, the world is now unipolar in character in which the dominant, even hegemonic, superpower veers between isolationism and unilateralism, thus creating a lot of uncertainty and disequilibrium in the international system. Our interest in NAM, of course, should be to promote multilateralism as the central and indispensable pillar of the new international order.

8. Inter-state conflicts of the past, while not entirely over, have increasingly been replaced by intra-state conflicts as the greatest threat to human security, as evidenced by the explosion of ethnic conflicts in many regions of the world. The challenge for the NAM would be one of putting our own house in order so as to avoid interference from the rich and the powerful who do so in pursuit of their own agendas.

9. At the same time, the concept of sovereignty of states – so sacrosanct to our Movement – has now come under challenge and is being constantly undermined by a number of factors, not the least of which, by the very process of globalization. For many of us, still locked in the process of establishing a firm foundation for nationhood, this diminution of national sovereignty has wrought immeasurable damage, at times threatening our very viability and existence as nation states.

10. On the international economic front, the situation also does not hold out too much promise for developing countries. All of us have experienced the pitfalls of globalization, which was once touted as the panacea for all of our economic ills. While globalisation has provided some of us with opportunities, on balance, globalization has been a bane for the overwhelming majority of the developing countries. Our share of the so-called "prosperity" brought by globalisation has been too little and too fleeting. On the contrary, far too often, the developing countries have borne the main brunt of the negative effects of globalisation, especially in the context of a slowdown in the global economy.

11. Virtually all of us are indebted in varying degree to the rich, either directly or indirectly, or through the institutions and agencies which they control. Very often we have to swallow our national pride and put ourselves under their direction or "tutelage". Those who do not do so are castigated as pariahs. However, there is no guarantee of success for those of us who conform to the standards that has been set. At any rate, we would find ourselves in the untenable position of becoming even more heavily indebted to these institutions. To be sure, these standards are not the same as those which the rich set for themselves.

12. At the same time, developing countries continue to be subjected to a system of double standards and even hypocrisy in the field of human rights and humanitarian assistance. Repeated calls by the Movement over the lack of resources for responding to and addressing humanitarian emergencies in a uniform and objective manner across the globe without favouritism have gone unheeded. It needs to be reiterated that the failure to provide stable and adequate resources and balanced contributions undermines the principles of humanitarian assistance and weakens the ability of humanitarian actors to respond to emergencies in a coherent, timely and effective manner.

13. While lecturing and hectoring the developed countries selectively and targeting us for alleged human rights violations, acts of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of related intolerance is on the increase in their own countries. It would seem that the fight against terrorism has brought out the worst racist impulses in these countries, which is now manifested in their policies established in the aftermath of September 11, including those which can be considered to be racial profiling. We are also greatly concerned that political parties whose ideologies are based on doctrines of racial superiority, racial discrimination or ethnic exclusiveness have made significant inroads in the polity of these countries. Our Movement should continue to condemn these ideologies as being incompatible not only with democracy and good governance, but as an affront to human civilization itself. Clearly, rather than being defensive, NAM has to continue to be in the forefront of the fight against racism. We should also do more in the area of humanitarian issues.

14. In short, NAM's goal of establishing an international system based on peace, justice, equality, democracy and full respect for human rights and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations is far from being achieved. In the face of these challenges to our Movement, it is imperative that we continue with our struggle with greater resolve and determination. NAM must respond to the growing consensus that conflict should not be resolved through force and we must always uphold the multilateral process in resolving the dispute relating to international peace and security.

Recording the Position of the Movement: Documents of the Summit

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

15. Our success would depend, not on our rhetoric but our action, not by the length, passion or elegance of our speeches, but on concrete actions and our ability to implement our decisions. You have a special responsibility in this regard, as senior officials entrusted with the implementation of the policies set by our leaders.

16. The bulk of your time will be spent on discussing and finalizing the Final Document. This is indeed a formidable task given the fact that the draft document contains over 300 paragraphs. Our critics have said and will to continue to say, I am sure, that time spent on the Final Document is time well and truly wasted, as in the end no one will really bother to read it. To be frank, they are right. Every effort must be made between now and the next Summit to ensure that this important document will be much shorter in length, more focused and readable, as enjoined in the principles on methodology adopted in Cartagena, while however bearing in mind the history of our Movement, its large and diverse membership and breadth and complexity of the issues we have to deal with. Perhaps one approach would be to summarise all of the targets contained in the Final Document, along the lines of the Millennium Development Goals document, which is an extract of the Millennium Declaration. A target document would also simplify the process of monitoring the implementation of the targets and decisions of the Summit.

Conclusion

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

17. In conclusion, I firmly believe that the challenge facing the NAM in ensuring its continued relevance is, inter-alia, one of repackaging and retooling itself in the context of the realities of the international order, which is in a state of flux, hence the theme of this Summit. To assist us in charting the course for our Movement, at least in the immediate years ahead of us, it is our hope, as the host of the XIII NAM Summit, that our leaders will be able to adopt the "Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Continuing the Revitalisation of the Non-Aligned Movement". The Declaration will contain, inter-alia, a set of guiding principles as well as some concrete measures that could be taken by NAM aimed at making our Movement more pro-active, responsive, effective and efficient in the context of its continuing revitalization to enable us to live in a world that is just and peaceful, not subjected to the threat of war and uncertainties. Naturally, its final content will depend, in large measure, on the outcome of the Ministerial interactive sessions that will take place in a few days time.

18. Whether our Movement becomes marginalized or sidelined, it is up to us. In the final analysis, our Movement is what we make of it and its successes and failures are our own.

I wish you every success in your deliberations.

Thank you.