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Mr. Chairman,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to express my thanks and appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Indonesia for inviting me to participate in this meeting of the Asian-African Sub-Regional Conference (AASROC) here in Bandung in Malaysia's capacity as the Chairman of the Non-Alignment Movement. We all recall the important role played by Indonesia and Bandung in the history of the struggle of the developing countries. It was here in this charming city that 48 years ago some twenty-nine leaders of the developing countries met for the historic first Asian-African Conference. Let me also congratulate Indonesia and South Africa, the co-hosts of this Conference, for their important initiative in the effort to further enhance cooperation and collaboration between Asia and Africa.

What happened here in 1955 was of monumental importance to the developing countries as a whole. It laid the foundation for a grand coalition or alliance amongst them in their common struggle against colonialism, oppression, racism and apartheid economic backwardness and crippling poverty and for a more equitable global order. It helped transform the geopolitical landscape of the world in the years and decades that followed.

Undoubtedly, the Non-Alignment Movement owes a great debt of gratitude to the leaders who gathered here in Bandung almost half a century ago. The Movement acknowledges their contribution and pays tribute to their lofty vision and great courage which had inspired an entire generation of leaders of the developing countries. The Spirit of Bandung had fired the imagination of the nations of Asia and Africa at a critical juncture in their history and inspired an entire generation of leaders of the Third World. It led, six years later, to the establishment of the Movement of Non-Alignment Countries which played such a prominent role in galvanizing the unity, cohesion and solidarity among them as they faced the challenges that confronted them for most of the last century.

Since then the international landscape has undergone a tremendous transformation. Many of the things that these leaders fought for have been achieved. Colonialism has practically been eradicated and today out of a total of 189 members of the United Nations, almost two-thirds are from the developing world. Apartheid has been

vanquished and in its place is a free, sovereign and democratically vibrant South Africa which had admirably led the Non-Aligned Movement for four fruitful years.

### **International Peace and Security**

However, many of the challenges remain, including some new ones that have emerged since then. In the realm of international peace and security, our vision of a peaceful, just and secure world continues to elude humankind. We note with growing concern that many regions of the developing world continue to be beset by disputes and violent conflicts. We continue to witness aggression and foreign occupation, interference in the domestic affairs of States, policies of hegemony and domination, unilateral and coercive measures, ethnic strife, religious intolerance, xenophobia and new forms of racism and narrow nationalism. They have posed major and dangerous obstacles to harmonious co-existence among States and peoples and have even led to the disintegration of States and societies. Unfortunately, this tragic situation is likely to continue unless we are prepared to make serious efforts to address them.

At the XIII NAM Summit held in Kuala Lumpur on 24-25 February 2003, the leaders of NAM member states had addressed crucial global issues affecting our peoples and agreed to a set of actions in the promotion of peace, security, justice, equality, democracy and development, that are conducive for a multilateral system of relations based on the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States, the rights of peoples to self-determination and non-intervention in matters which are essentially within the jurisdiction of States, in accordance with international law and the UN Charter.

It is clear from that Summit that the Spirit of Bandung is still very much alive. Among others, the Summit had reaffirmed its commitments to the Bandung Principles. It reaffirmed the continuing central role of the UN in the maintenance of international peace and security and the strengthening of international co-operation. It resolutely rejected all unilateral military actions, including those made without proper authorisation from the United Nations Security Council, as well as threats of military action against the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Member States of the Movement which constitute acts of aggression and blatant violations of the principle of non-intervention and non-interference. The Summit also resolved to redouble efforts towards nuclear disarmament and to ensure a more speedy progress in the total reduction and elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. In fact, there was a broadly-shared concern and sense of urgency within the Movement for the reduction of all weapons, conventional and unconventional, through the reduction of military expenditures so that resources could be made available to economic and social development, in particular in the fight against poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

## **Trade and Economic Issues**

While the Bandung Conference of 1955 is best known for its Ten Principles of relations among states in the promotion of world peace and cooperation, it also devoted a lot of attention to the importance of economic and cultural cooperation between Asia and Africa, as reflected in its Final Communiqué. In this regard, the AASROC initiative is a timely effort, three years into the twenty-first century, to breathe new life into those spheres of cooperation identified in Bandung in 1955, in the expectation that countries of Asia and Africa would draw fresh inspiration to further enhance their cooperation in advancing their development agendas as they face the new challenges of the new century.

As was recognised at the Kuala Lumpur Summit, the time has come for the developing countries to be more assertive in determining the nature and direction of international relations, including economic and trade relations which, for a long time, has been dominated by the developed countries. It is imperative that the developing countries have a greater say in determining the rules governing these relations as many of them affect the developing countries in a negative way. We are all too keenly aware of and concerned at the negative impact of the globalisation process on many of our countries. In its present form, it perpetuates or even increases the marginalisation of developing countries. It is therefore important for us to ensure that globalisation will be a positive force for change and will benefit all countries and peoples, especially the poorest of them. Globalisation should lead to the prospering and empowering of the developing countries, not their continued impoverishment and dependence on the wealthy and developed world. A strategic partnership between Asia and Africa covering many areas of common interest could give a new meaning and dimension to globalisation, one that would benefit rather than deprive their peoples.

We recognise that the globalised economy offers great opportunities but its benefits are very unevenly shared and its costs unfairly distributed. We continue to confront problems of access to markets, capital and technology. Many of us still grapple with the institutional transformation necessary for meaningful integration into the world economy. In spite of the significant steps taken by many of us to liberalise and integrate further our economies into the world economy, the anticipated benefits have not been realised and the economic gaps between rich and poor countries, far from being bridged, are getting wider in many instances.

Another area of cooperation that needs to be enhanced is economic and technical co-operation among developing countries in the context of South-South cooperation. There has been considerable progress made in this area and a number of Asian countries, including Malaysia, have an active programme of technical cooperation vis-à-vis African countries. However, this area of cooperation can be further enhanced, with the more developed of the developing countries playing a more active role, in the spirit of Asian-African solidarity that was forged in Bandung. This is not to dismiss the important role of our development partners and donor countries. They could contribute in this area, perhaps within a framework of triangular arrangement involving African human and natural resources, Asian experience and

know-how and Northern funding. They can also assist in capacity-building programmes aimed at strengthening South institutions.

### **Financial, Investment and Monetary Issues**

Clearly, the rapid development of the developing countries requires an enabling economic and financial environment at the international level, beginning with a reform and restructuring of the international economic and financial system. There is obviously an urgent need to address systemic concerns such as the need to ensure the effective and full participation of the developing countries in the norm-setting and decision-making processes of the system.

In the wake of the Asian financial crisis, a more transparent and democratic structure should be in place that would protect developing countries against the excessive volatility of short-term capital flows and international speculation. Transparency of capital flows, more effective regulation of the operation of financial institutions, early warning system and an enhanced crisis management system must be in place to ensure greater stability and predictability of the financial markets thereby mitigating the possible adverse impact of financial crises among developing countries that might occur in the future. Clearly, the bitter lessons learnt from the Asian financial crisis can be shared with African countries so that they could exercise greater vigilance against the possibility of it occurring in Africa. What happened in Asia could also happen in Africa, unless regulations are put in place.

### **North-South Cooperation**

The Movement attaches great importance on the need to revitalise international development co-operation and multilateral negotiations with a North-South or development orientation. Based on the increasing recognition that the needs of the developing countries cannot be met solely by a focus on the market economy, the Movement has urged for a recommitment to and an urgent resumption of international actions aimed specifically at improving the global environment for development, such as aid on concessional terms, measures to counter the instability and weakness of commodity markets, preferential tariffs for developing country exports, debt reduction, mechanisms for the transfer of technology and basic reforms in the international financial architecture.

The NAM is resolved to pursue an increased, constructive and effective North-South dialogue and interaction as well as to promote a more dynamic and cooperative relationship with the developed countries, in particular the G8. This undertaking should be pursued based on broad partnership, constructive engagement, mutuality of interests and benefits, shared responsibilities and genuine interdependence through existing and appropriate new mechanisms, including institutionalised contacts. We hope that through such approach and modality a common effort in dealing with international issues and greater understanding between the North and South could be forged so as to ensure that the views of the developing countries are fully taken into account before important decisions affecting the developing countries

are formalised. The commendable initiative taken by France to convene an enlarged informal dialogue with a number of developing countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America on the eve of the last G8 Summit in Evian, France, was a welcomed step in the right direction. We hope that this mechanism of North-South dialogue could be institutionalised.

### **Special Needs of and Critical Economic Situation in Africa**

The special needs of Africa are well recognised by the international community, as reflected in the outcome document of every major international conference in recent years, such as the UN Millennium Declaration, the Ministerial Declaration of the 2001 High Level Segment of the Substantive Session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on the role of the UN in support of the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development, the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development (ICFfD), and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

The Non-Alignment Movement is painfully aware of the precarious socio-economic situation in Africa. It is concerned that in the context of globalisation and liberalisation, the decline in ODA, minimal FDI and other financial flows to Africa the marginalisation of the continent in the global economy will increase. Clearly, this negative trend must be reversed. I hope that in the context of AASROC, the Asian countries could do more in assisting Africa through more aid, trade and investment and, equally importantly, in sharing their own developmental experiences.

The Movement has given its strong support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) aimed at assisting African states to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of under-development and exclusion in a globalised world. This is as it should be as almost half of the Movement's membership is made up of African countries which have been one of the prime movers of the Movement since its establishment. The NAM fully endorses the comprehensive development approach of the NEPAD which calls for a substantive new partnership, including with the international and African private sectors, as well as with bilateral and multilateral financial and technical partners, together with the African civil society and people as a whole. NEPAD deserves the strong support of the international community, in particular donor countries.

We therefore welcome the expressed support and involvement of the industrialised countries in the implementation of the Pan-African Initiative which is important for its success. The Movement is particularly pleased that the G8 has been focusing on the special needs and concerns of Africa as one of the important items under the G8 agenda in the past few years. We hope that the interest placed on promoting the development of Africa will be sustained in the years ahead to ensure the full fruition of the NEPAD initiative.

## **Challenges and Prospects for the Future**

Clearly, our work is far from over. It is imperative that we, the developing countries, must continue with our common struggle to overcome the ills that beset us. We must reject unilateralism, which is very antithesis of the principle of multilateralism that we support and promote through the UN and NAM. Unilateralism is increasingly eroding international law through the use and threat of use of force or other forms of intervention against states. We must remain united and not allow ourselves to succumb to pressure and coercion by bigger and more powerful nations as a means to achieving their strategic objectives. We must make every effort to promote respect for and adherence to the principles of the UN Charter and international law.

Countries of Asia and Africa, as well as other developing countries in other regions of the globe, are currently facing new and multifaceted challenges, particularly with the onset of globalisation. It is imperative that they continue to strengthen their cooperation, coordination and collaboration in facing these challenges and advocating for global peace and security, establishment of an equitable political, economic and social order, social justice, more equitable trade relations, promotion and expansion of investments, unconditional aid and assistance, eradication of poverty, easing of the oppressive and debilitating debt burden of developing countries, alleviation of the negative impact of globalisation and global partnership for sustainable development.

Asian and African countries are well placed to lead in this area not only because of Bandung, which is of course historically important, but also because of geopolitical realities whereby with a combined population of some 4.3 billion and their enormous natural resources, Asia-Africa cooperation and partnership will be a force to be reckoned with. In the context of the growing interdependence between countries and regions, the inter-regional partnership between Asia and Africa, two large continents situated near each other and bound by friendship forged through a common struggle, would be the natural fulfillment of a need. In the context of AASROC and the overall framework of the Non-Aligned Movement, the countries of Asia and Africa can work together and use their combined comparative advantages to become more efficient and competitive in the production and distribution of their goods and services, especially in their relations with developed countries. We consider the AASROC initiative as being part and parcel of the rejuvenation of the Movement and as an important cog in the wheel of the revitalization of the Movement. We view it as being complementary to and consistent with the efforts of the Movement, as reflected in the "Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Continuing the Revitalisation of the Movement", which inter-alia, states that the Member States of the Movement will strive to:

"expand, deepen and enrich South-South cooperation through enhanced regional and inter-regional cooperation, undertaking concrete projects and programmes, pooling of resources, and tapping the contributions of eminent personalities and institutions of the South".

We consider the AASROC initiative as part of the efforts to enhance and add substance to South-South cooperation involving cooperation and collaboration between regional and sub-regional organizations of Asia and Africa. It is at once a tribute to the Spirit and Vision of Bandung and an attempt to propel the process forward by tapping the inherent dynamism of these two vast and important continents. We hope through the synergy that will be generated between them the two regions would be less dependent on the North and would become more self-reliant. In this expectation we hope that some concrete programmes of action would result from the AASROC process to make this a reality.

What we would like to see in the new century is the end of the South's over-dependence on the North in favour of collective self-reliance and sufficiency based on a strategic pooling of resources, expertise and know-how and in the recognition that most of their needs are found in and can be obtained from the South. The potentials are enormous and remain largely untapped. Clearly, the achievements of AASROC will contribute to the overall success of cooperation and collaboration among developing countries within the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77. In a world that is getting more and more complex, yet interdependent, the developing countries must utilize every available mechanism to foster and enhance the level of cooperation among them and leverage their collective strength vis-à-vis their partners in the North.

AASROC is, therefore, recognition of the potentially important role that could be played by Asia and Africa premised on the recognition of their global importance both in terms of their human and natural resources. By forging a strategic partnership between Asia and Africa within a framework of global partnership it is hoped that AASROC could realize the full potential of Asian-African cooperation.

In conclusion, I wish to express the hope and expectation that the reawakening of the Spirit of Bandung would spur greater cooperation and collaboration between Asia and Africa in the years ahead, thereby fulfilling the vision shared by the leaders in Bandung five decades ago. On behalf of the Non-aligned Movement I wish the Conference every success in its important deliberations, in the interest of Asia and Africa, as well as as all of the countries of the South.