

By : DATUK SERI SYED HAMID ALBAR
Venue : PUTRAJAYA
Date : 6 APRIL 2004
Title : REMARKS AT THE FAREWELL DINNER IN HONOUR OF H.E.JAMES KIHU KARUGA HIGH COMMISSIONER OF THE REPUBLIC KENYA

Hon. Datuk Joseph Salang Gandum
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hon. Datuk Zainal Abidin Osman
Parliament Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Y.Bhg Dato' Haji Salim Hashim
Deputy Secretary General I

Guests of Honour H.E James K. Karuga
The High Commissioner of the Republic Kenya to Malaysia
and the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps
and Madam Dorcas M. Karuga

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalamualaikum and a very good evening.

Let me first just say how happy I am to see all of you again at a small gathering this evening here in Putrajaya. I purposely chose to hold the gathering here instead of at a hotel in Kuala Lumpur because it provides us with a more friendly and warm atmosphere. I think this is in accordance with our objective to further enhance friendlier and warmer bilateral relations between our countries!

2. Well, the general elections are over and the results are known. We are very grateful that the elections went on very smoothly and peacefully. We are also grateful the Barisan Nasional under the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has been returned to power with an overwhelming majority winning 198 out of 219 parliamentary seats. The big mandate given to Barisan Nasional in the last elections serves to demonstrate that Malaysians from all walks of life have their confidence in the leadership of the Prime Minister and the Government and want the Barisan Nasional Government to continue with its development agenda. We are indeed grateful and humbled by this strong mandate. This is a heavy responsibility, and the Government will do its best to fulfil the trust given by the rakyat. Let me, however, take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and deep appreciation to you and through you, Excellencies, to your Governments and Foreign Ministers for the well wishes and congratulatory messages extended to me for winning the elections and on my re-appointment as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia.

3. The new Government has been officially formed with four new ministries created, some ministries renamed to suit the present needs and new development agenda. The cabinet line-up has also been expanded to meet the bigger responsibility and challenges ahead with some ministers reassigned to new portfolios. The names of a few ministries, however, have been maintained and their ministers also retained. That, of course, includes the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Wisma Putra. I am glad and grateful to be re-appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs for one simple reason. I have been in the Ministry for slightly over five years and already quite familiar with the Ministry's scope of works and responsibilities. Unlike those ministers who have been reassigned, I am spared from the gruelling task of getting familiarized with new job and responsibility, let alone the new set of people whom we have to deal with!

4. On a more serious note, as Minister of Foreign Affairs I hope I can continue to forge an even closer relationship and cooperation between Malaysia and the countries around the world. Only through this can we contribute towards and create a more peaceful and prosperous world community.

5. Wisma Putra, as all of you realize, sees a small change taking place under the new line-up. The Hon. Datuk Dr. Leo Micheal Toyad, the former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs has been promoted and is now heading the newly created Ministry of Tourism. His place is taken over by the Hon. Datuk Joseph Salang Gandum, who is also from Sarawak, as the new Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. I am told that Datuk Joseph Salang Gandum had his first official touch last night attending the reception of the 44th Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of Senegal at Nikko Hotel. Wisma Putra also is very fortunate to have a Parliamentary Secretary, the Hon. Datuk Zainal Abidin Osman, who hails from Pulau Pinang. Both are with us this evening and I would like to take this opportunity to introduce them to you. I am sure you will meet them both more often in the future.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. We are gathered here this evening to honour His Excellency James K. Karuga, the High Commissioner of the Republic of Kenya and the Dean of the Diplomatic Corp. and Madam Dorcas M. Karuga. His Excellency Karuga is completing his tour of duty as the High Commissioner of the Republic of Kenya and will return to Nairobi in the next couple of days. He will also relinquish his position as the Dean of the Diplomatic Corp. Going by the past tradition and practice, the head of the Diplomatic Corp will go to the next longest serving Head of Mission. It is for this reason that His Excellency Rachid Bladehane, the Ambassador of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria is also with us this evening as the incoming Dean of the Diplomatic Corp. I am very honoured to host this special occasion not only to bid a farewell but more importantly as a gesture of my sincere appreciation to our guests of honour, His Excellency James K. Karuga and Madam Dorcas M. Karuga, for their great contributions. I am also pleased to welcome His Excellency Rachid Bladehane as the incoming Dean of the Diplomatic Corp.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. His Excellency James K. Karuga has been in Malaysia for almost 7 years and is the First High Commissioner of Kenya to Malaysia since the establishment of the High Commission of the Republic of Kenya in May 1997. During his tenure as the High Commissioner, His Excellency Karuga has been very active in the diplomatic community in Kuala Lumpur, especially as the Dean of the Diplomatic Corp. I am sure all members of the diplomatic community can attest to his many contributions. He has also been instrumental in enhancing and strengthening bilateral relations between Malaysia and Kenya.

8. I am very pleased with the existing warm and friendly relations between Malaysia and the Republic of Kenya, thanks to His Excellency's role, efforts and commitment in promoting and consolidating closer relations between our two countries. Since arriving in 1997, His Excellency Karuga has been active in particular in the areas of trade and investment. The increase in the level of trade and investment since 1997 between the two countries speaks volume of His Excellency's endless efforts and contributions. The period also witnessed an increase in the number of visits to Malaysia especially among Kenya's officials. There is also a substantial increase in the number of Kenyan students pursuing their higher education in various higher learning institutions in Malaysia. Indeed, the presence of Kenyans in Malaysia has enabled and enriched us as Malaysians of our understanding of some of Kenyan culture and traditions. Similarly, Kenyans in Malaysia are also able to enrich their knowledge and understanding of some aspects of Malaysian culture and traditions.

9. There are still areas whereby Malaysia and the Republic of Kenya could cooperate in the future for our mutual benefits. There are good experiences that the two countries can still share with each other and take advantage of. It is hoped that the existing warm and friendly relations and cooperation between Malaysia and the Republic of Kenya in various areas can be further enhanced in the future. This, I am sure, is possible and within our reach. I also hope that the Republic of Kenya has benefited from the MTCP.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. In conclusion, let me once again thank His Excellency James K. Karuga for his untiring efforts and commitment in ensuring closer bilateral relations and cooperation between Malaysia and the Republic of Kenya. I hope Your Excellency and Madam have had a wonderful experience and pleasant stay for the last seven years in Malaysia. I hope both of you will leave Malaysia with a lot of happy and fond memories. May I also take this opportunity to wish you, Excellency and Madam all the very best and success in your future undertaking in Nairobi.

I thank you.