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Title : STATEMENT AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE XIV NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Your Excellency, President Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa,

Your Excellency, Minister Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Africa,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me, first of all, in Malaysia's capacity as the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, to take this opportunity to express Malaysia's and the Movement's profound thanks and gratitude to the Government of the Republic of South Africa for agreeing to host this XIV Ministerial Meeting of NAM, here in beautiful Durban, which we are all have come to love over the years and has become our second home. In bidding you welcome to his important Meeting, let me also take this opportunity to express, on your and my own behalf, our sincere thanks and gratitude to the Government and people of South Africa for the warm welcome, courtesies and generous hospitality extended to us, since our arrival, and for the excellent arrangements made for this conference. We are also very grateful and honoured by the presence, at this opening ceremony, this morning, of His Excellency, President Thabo Mbeki.

Our meeting, here, in Durban, marks, more or less, the mid-point of Malaysia's chairmanship of the Movement. It is a strategic point in time: it will allow us to look back at the past eighteen months since the Kuala Lumpur Summit, and particularly since the last NAM Ministerial Meeting in New York, last September – on which I will have the honour to report to you, shortly – and to look forward to our future programmes and activities, leading up to the XIV Summit of the Movement in Havana, Cuba, sometime in 2006.

For our Movement and for all our countries that make up this great family of developing nations, the contemporary world remains a very challenging place. The air of unease and uncertainty that greeted the new Century and the new Millennium persists, with unresolved conflicts continuing in a number of our countries, affecting peace and security and the well-being of our peoples. Added to this is the continuing threat of international terrorism, which, far from being defeated, remains pervasive and persistent, manifesting itself in various forms and permutations, like a virus, in response to the measures taken against its perpetrators, which makes our efforts at its elimination even more difficult. Clearly, as this is a global threat, affecting our own respective national security, it is in our interest to be actively involved in the

international efforts to eliminate this threat, within our own national capacities and in accordance with our laws and regulations.

Excellencies,

Given the state of the world we live in, NAM can ill afford to be sanguine about the future. In the face of these challenges, we have no choice but to close ranks and to enhance our unity and cohesion and to resist all efforts and tendencies that will weaken us as nation states and as a Movement or Forum of developing countries, with our own distinct set of concerns, priorities and aspirations. We must continue to be at the vanguard of the defence and promotion of multilateralism, which is the *raison-d'etre* of our being as a Movement and that of the United Nations, which we must staunchly support since our futures are intertwined. Hence, the vital importance of our collective efforts to uphold the Charter of the United Nations, the central role of the Organisation in the multilateral process, and strict adherence to international law and the norms of civilized conduct among nations. All of these fundamental principles, which we hold dear, and which define our Movement, can be compromised only at our peril.

In this regard, Malaysia is particularly gratified with the passage, on 30 July 2004, of General Assembly Resolution, "Reaffirming the central role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and the promotion of international cooperation". This important initiative by NAM, which reaffirmed support, political commitment and adherence to the central role of the United Nations in fulfillment of its role and responsibilities under the Charter, represented a first major step to arrest the erosion and weakening of the role of the United Nations in the last several years. It was a major diplomatic move by NAM in its continuing efforts to restore the prestige, credibility and effectiveness of the UN, to strengthen multilateralism and promote an international system based on the rule of law, international consensus and diplomacy, rather than on intimidation, coercion or force.

The Movement must therefore continue to strongly support the Secretary-General of the United Nations, given the common goals, objectives and overall approaches that we share with him and the Organisation that he heads. We must all welcome his commendable initiative to establish his High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, as we also welcome the 2005 Special Event to review the Millennium Summit and other major conferences, all of which would contribute to strengthening the UN system and the multilateral process on which it rests. As I had said on an earlier occasion, the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations are passengers in the same boat and we will swim or sink together; hence the imperative of our working together for the attainment of our common goals, in the interests of the international community.

As always, whenever there are challenges, there are also opportunities. As we face the challenges together – whether it relates to the situation in Iraq, Palestine and the Middle East, International Terrorism, Weapons of Mass Destruction, or the gamut of still unresolved socio-economic and development issues confronting us – let us also

explore opportunities of forging closer cooperation among us for our mutual and collective benefits. Most importantly, let us work together to make our one and only world a better and safer place for us, as well as for generations to come.

Excellencies,

In meeting the many challenges ahead of us – and reaping the opportunities of our closer cooperation and collaboration – we will have to make full use of the decisions and agreements we have arrived at among us in the past. We must transform words into concrete action. As Chairman of the Movement, Malaysia, within its capacity to do so, has endeavoured and will continue to endeavour to put substance to the Decisions and Declarations of our leaders, including the "Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Continuing the Revitalisation of the Non-Aligned Movement", which acts as a kind of a blue-print or roadmap towards making NAM a more effective, efficient and relevant Forum of the developing world in this new era of increased globalization and liberalisation. However, the key to our success lies in our capacity and capability to act in concert and in unison, in unity and cohesion, without which, I am afraid, our lofty statements will remain simply a rhetoric, and will not enhance our capacity to make an impact in the councils of the world. This, to me, is the main challenge facing NAM and upon it depends its continuing relevance in an ever-changing global environment. I am confident, however, if we remain true to the spirit of NAM and the principles that inspired our founding fathers, we shall together be able to overcome the impediments and obstacles in our path towards a more united and cohesive organization of developing countries that we all aspire for.

On that note, Excellencies, let me, once again, thank our generous host, South Africa, and in particular His Excellency President Thabo Mbeki, and my dear colleague and friend, Dr. Zuma, for making it possible for us to come back home to Durban for our important deliberations. The ready willingness on the part of South Africa, our former Chair, to host this Ministerial Meeting on behalf of the African Group, is testimony to South Africa's and President Mbeki's strong and abiding commitment to our Movement and what it stands for, for which we shall always be grateful.

Thank you.