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Title : WELCOMING REMARKS AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me, first of all, welcome and thank you for attending this annual Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Non-Aligned Movement. May I welcome, in particular, the Hon'ble Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the Prime Minister of Malaysia and Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, President of the 59th Session of the UN General Assembly, and His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, to our Meeting this morning. We are greatly honoured by their presence, here, today.

2. We last met in Durban, South Africa, at the XIV NAM Ministerial Conference on 19 August 2004 during which we had a very useful meeting and exchange of views on issues of importance to the Movement. We had, among others, deliberated on the challenges facing the international community, the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations, the role and future of multilateralism, strengthening of international law, and the centrality and credibility of the UN in facing these global challenges. Among the many challenges that would be faced by the international community would include the maintenance of international peace and security in the context of our time, particularly in the context of new regional conflicts that might emerge, combating international terrorism, eradication of poverty, and the continuing problems faced by the developing countries in the areas of development and trade, particularly in the context of globalization and liberalization. In this regard, we welcomed and expressed strong support for the initiative taken by the UN Secretary-General to establish his High-Level Panel on Challenges, Threats and Change and looked forward to providing appropriate inputs to the Panel from the perspective of the Movement and the developing countries in general. We also expressed our continuing strong support for the efforts made in the General Assembly to strengthen and revitalise the Assembly. We looked forward to working closely with the President of the 59th Session of the Assembly and to support his own efforts in this regard.

3. In view of the importance of these inter-related issues, it is our intention at this Meeting, today, to continue with our deliberations on the same themes, with a focus on the topic, "Reforming the United Nations to Meet Global Threats and Challenges of the 21st Century", as reflected in Item 4 of our Agenda. It is also our intention that the outcome of our interactive deliberations at this Meeting would form the basis of the Movement's inputs to the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.