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Title : "REFORM OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC) - IMPACT ON THE MUSLIM WORLD IN THE 21ST CENTURY"

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Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Faculty Members and students of Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences.

Assalamualaikum and Good Afternoon.

Alhamdulillah, praise to Allah SWT for his blessings for me to be here this afternoon. I would like to thank the Members of the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences for inviting me to share my thoughts with all of you on this very important , and might I add a very current, topic which is of concern not only to Malaysia but also to other nations as well.

2. The UN as the only universal body in the world today, will certainly have an impact on the Muslim world if the member states decide to institute new changes or reform its structure at the forthcoming 60th UNGA Session which will begin in a few weeks time. The impact undoubtedly will be far reaching as it will set a new direction in the global political setting and may influence the conduct of relations and interaction between nations. The UN will not only get a new face but will also result in new ways on how it will manage itself in its relationship with member states, especially when agreement on the new structure of the UN Security Council, which is considered by some member states as the most important aspect of the UN reform , is finalized.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. The OIC and UN are two different organisations. OIC is our answer to the pains and suffering of the Muslims following the burning of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of the three holiest places in Islam. As a result of this, the leaders of the Muslim countries decided to establish a body, consisting of Muslim countries, to deal with the terrible act perpetrated by the Zionists elements as well as to defend the Palestinians people from the Israeli aggression and illegal occupation. Unlike the UN which is established and functions as a international institution, the OIC is only a Conference of Islamic countries thus often regarded as 'talkshop' and no action taken to implement the decisions agreed.

4. Malaysia as the current chair of the OIC Summit has a special interest on this issue of UN reform and has a big and onerous responsibility to see that it will not marginalize the concerns of the Muslim Ummah. As an organization, which aims to promote Islamic solidarity and to safeguard the interest and the well-being of the Ummah, the OIC has the responsibility to elevate the standing of Muslims and to contribute to the betterment of the Muslim countries wherever they may be. This is our primary responsibility. The OIC has made it very clear that the reform of the UN should take into account the adequate representation of the Islamic Ummah in any category of membership in an expanded Security Council.

5. The task may not be easy as the challenges are tremendous. The OIC today is at a crossroads and now has to deal with issues that are no longer limited to the realm of politics. It must deal with new and emerging issues, such as global trade, economic development, globalization, poverty eradication, education, science and technology, transnational crimes as well as the most topical subject of terrorism. These are some of the more immediate issues confronting the Muslim world and, despite having been in existence for the last 36 years, the OIC has not been able to effectively create the confidence among the Muslims and non-Muslims. It has suffered due to various constraints which adversely affect its mission as well as its image. The OIC has been perceived to be structurally weak and does not have sufficient clout in reacting to global challenges and addressing the woes and concerns of the Ummah in an effective manner. It has been identified as an organization which mainly directed its activities in the areas of politics, specifically on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and many other situations of injustices committed against the Muslims. It is equally important for the OIC to now have a new mind-set and focus on other important issues, particularly in the fields of economics and trade. With economic strength, it will give political strength to the OIC. Cognizant of this, the OIC member countries had agreed to task the OIC Commission of Eminent Persons to formulate recommendations for the OIC and Muslims to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Prof. Mohd Kamal Hassan is one of the Commissioners who has been involved in this task. This matter will also be considered by the OIC Extraordinary Summit scheduled to be held in Makkah at the end of this year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. What the Muslim nations need to do is to embark on a serious examination of the current structure of the OIC system. I always believe that it is important for us to undertake self examination or muhasabah to find means and ways to improve ourselves. The Organisation needs to be restructured in order to strengthen it, and this is to be achieved through an objective review and evaluation of its role, structure, methodology and decision making processes, as well as its strategic global partnerships, so as to ensure its continued relevance, efficiency and responsiveness to the needs of Member States and the Muslims. Like many other international governmental organizations, the OIC provides its Member States with a platform to express their opinion on different international and regional issues. Unfortunately, due to our inabilities, others are making decisions that affect us all. The reform of the UN, on the other hand, provides a good opportunity for the OIC member countries to seriously embark on the reform of the OIC as well. If we want to be

counted in as a player and influence the international agenda, we need to have an effective organization.

7. Therefore, a revamp of OIC General Secretariat, examination of the Charter of the OIC in relation to the workings of the Secretariat, reviewing the issues of membership and observers as well as its mandate, including establishing a mechanism to implement OIC resolutions which are voluminous, are necessary. We have to begin with one small step and translate words into action to ensure that OIC will be a credible and respected international body, particularly in the eyes of the Muslim world.

8. I am glad that the recent 32nd ICFM held in Sana'a, Yemen from 28 to 30 June 2005, had decided that it was timely for the OIC to review the OIC system including its Charter, the Statutes, Rules of Procedure and the change of the name of the Organization. The next step is the implementation of this decision, which is very important to ensure that the agreed objective is attained. It is our hope that the OIC will be transformed into an efficient body to meet the challenges of the 21st century for the sake of Muslim nations and Muslims.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. Notwithstanding the ongoing reforms of the UN and review of the OIC system, it is critical that the Muslim and non-Muslim countries gather and work closely together as members of the international community. It is equally important for us to project our trajectory clearly that Muslims are not against others in wanting to bring about improvement to the Muslims all over the globe. We have to be part and parcel of the international community so as to rid of the fear or feeling of animosity towards Muslims by non-Muslims. It is hoped that by pooling together our minds and efforts, we can meet the challenges that confront us all. The failure to come to terms with this reality would have far reaching ramifications for everyone. No country is able to deal with the issues and challenges confronting the world on its own. No man is an island. Thus, regardless of whether one is a member of the UN or the OIC, our objective must be to strive and work for a more peaceful and just world. For the Muslim world, the task is a more daunting one as there exists a feeling among the Ummah that we have failed to control our own destiny. Worse, we are fearful of the forces surrounding us, latent or otherwise, that undermine our resolve and capabilities. Therefore, it is necessary that Muslim nations and the Ummah take an interest and be sensitive to global trends and the complex issues that impact on us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. Attempts to reform the UN are nothing new, in particular within an Organisation that is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. Over the years, changes have been instituted – some relating to procedures, others to the enlargement of membership of the various organs within the body. The latter is especially true following the late '60s and '70s, when the process of decolonization around the world saw a swelling of new membership within the UN, thus necessitating adjustments to itself and the

bodies functioning under it. This latest attempt at UN reform is the most comprehensive thus far. In fact, Malaysia has been at the forefront of these calls and efforts, having highlighted the need for it for more than a decade ago. We did and continue to do so not only as a country which believes in multilateralism but for pragmatic reasons as well. As a country which is located in a strategic part of the globe, and in between major powers, as well as a country that practice open economy which is dependent on trade, Malaysia's interests are best served in an international system governed by the rule of law, not on the arbitrary use of power and force.

11. We believe that any effort to reform the United Nations must necessarily be focused on the strengthening of the multilateral system, based on justice and international law. We must remain true to the basic purposes and principles surrounding its establishment, as contained in the UN Charter. To fundamentally change the UN to such a degree that it no longer embodies these purposes and principles would erode its credibility and render it irrelevant in the long term. In this regard, we must not allow the current geopolitical realities to reduce the UN into becoming a mere legitimizing organ for actions undertaken unilaterally. Reform of the UN must lead to the removal of the power asymmetries institutionalized by the current arrangements. The objective should be towards strengthening the multilateral system and not allowing for its diminution. Principles must prevail over power.

12. One important area of reform, and which has garnered the most interest in recent months, is reform of the Security Council making it loose as if the UN is now a one issue organization. The Council's present make-up reflects the world of 1945, not of the 21st century. As the realities of 1945 are happily no longer with us, its system must be changed to suit current realities. Mindful of those realities, the UN Secretary-General appointed a high-level Panel of Eminent Persons to elaborate on Threats, Challenges and Change facing the UN System. The Panel deliberated on the various issues and presented a report to him a year later. Based on the report submitted, the Secretary-General in turn presented a series of proposals on reforming the Organisation.

13. As it works in the UN, the report of the Secretary-General is to highlight issues and set the tone for a debate which would take place between the Member States of the Organisation. After such debates, hopefully Member States would usually adopt a resolution, outlining the commitments and actions to be taken to achieve certain goals and instruct the UN Secretariat to implement them. Similarly in the present case, the Report of the Secretary-General has led to efforts towards a draft resolution, in this instance called a draft Outcome Document, presented by the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Jean Ping of Gabon, for the consideration of Member States. That Document would be adopted by Leaders during a High-level Plenary Meeting which will be held at the United Nations from 14 to 16 September 2005. The Malaysian delegation will be headed by the Hon. Prime Minister himself to this high level Plenary Meeting.

14. The initial draft presented by the President has undergone three major rounds of consultations and negotiations, which as we speak, are still going-on in New York.

While the negotiations have led to the narrowing of gaps on many areas but differences remain on some others. However, I am confident that in the few remaining days before the Meeting, Member States will decide on the future of the UN. This will obviously have an impact on its Members and the international community as a whole.

15. That notwithstanding, I believe the UN has to continue to deal with some major issues, which are yet to be resolved and will have an impact on the members of the international community. This is where the real test for the 'new' UN will lie.

16. For example, on the reforming and strengthening the UN, for some countries, it merely means expanding the Security Council. Clearly, the reform of the United Nations is far more than this as it is a body not only advocating the need for peace as it also deals with other issues such as human rights and development. Thus, it is equally important that the General Assembly as the only universal organ within the United Nations be empowered and reinvigorated to play a more substantive role. It must serve as the real conscience of the world on the burning issues of our time. It must act as the main deliberative and policy making body of the UN and should not be weakened in order to enhance the Security Council or merely reduced to approving budgets and as a forum for the codification of international law. The UN Security Council, is not representative of the UN membership. Unfortunately, it is the most powerful organ due to its inherent 'veto' power of the five Permanent Members. Therefore, nothing will be approved or adopted if one of the P5 members exercise its veto. This is most difficult as none has agreed to remove the veto from the Security Council.

17. On Security Council reform, as most of you might know, the situation is currently stalemated. There are three competing proposals in the General Assembly. The Group of Four (G4 – Japan, Germany, Brazil and India) lacks two-thirds majority support for its initiative to expand the Council. Its initially optimistic outlook of gaining the African Group support for its draft resolution has since evaporated – the Extraordinary Summit of the African Union on 4 August decided that the Ezulwini Consensus, seeking two permanent seats with full veto powers and two new non-permanent seats for Africa, remains the African position. The Uniting for Consensus Group is of course proposing enlargement only in the non-permanent category.

18. The General Assembly must also invoke its inherent power under the Charter to improve the working methods of the Security Council, including the principle of accountability. Restructuring of the Security Council should relate not just to its expansion but more importantly, entail improvement of its working methods, including regulating and eventually eliminating the veto. The restructured Council must be transparent and accountable to the larger membership of the UN and not merely to the veto holders.

19. It is also crucial that for the General Assembly to be an effective organ of the UN, it should also benefit from the inputs of civil society and NGOs, without compromising its intergovernmental nature of one country one vote. The Organisation must strengthen its ties with civil society. They have proven to be a force and a factor leading to national development, be it in the field of economic and

social development, education, health, human rights as well as a plethora of other issues. In our individual and collective quests for a more just, democratic and progressive world, we must involve and work closely with members of civil society, who have much to contribute. The nature of work undertaken by governments and civil society necessarily differs; rather than make that a point of contention, we should harness the individual strengths brought by each sector for our common good.

20. Other than these proposals, the permanent members have also let their positions on the issue be known, which of course carries a lot of weight since any amendment to the Charter, which Council expansion necessarily must, needs the ratification of each of these five countries. The position of the US, China and to some extent the Russian Federation, in our view, gives clear indication that the G4 text does not enjoy their support.

21. While Council expansion has been an issue long debated, what has transpired is that it has taken the larger debate of UN reform hostage. This risks imperiling the entire reform process and dividing the international community. A better way forward to my mind would be for the General Assembly to take decisions by consensus, where it exists, and to continue discussions on areas of divergence.

22. We must recognize and accept that the final objective of UN reform efforts must result in a strengthened multilateral system, rather than one which merely amplifies the prevalent power asymmetries. Malaysia has consistently called upon the international community to unite in strengthening the United Nations and restore to the Organization its prestige and effectiveness. It is only by achieving this that the UN can be made more relevant for the entire world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

23. As I had said earlier, the new UN will have to continue to deal with many issues. Let me now elaborate on these issues a bit more before I conclude my talk.

24. Let me begin by touching on the Secretary-General's views of some key issues as contained in his Report. To me, the Secretary-General has tended to veer towards the views of the West, or perhaps, so-called conventional wisdom. For example, the Annan Report calls on all States to agree on a new security consensus, by which they commit themselves to treat any threat to one of them as a threat to all, and to work together to prevent catastrophic terrorism. How does he propose we do this? By asking developed countries to support anti-poverty strategies in developing countries – through increasing the amounts they spend on development and debt relief, and doing whatever they can to level the playing-field for world trade. In return, developing countries will stop the proliferation of deadly weapons, end civil wars, and build lasting peace in war-torn countries.

25. This sounds so simple as, it denotes that all security threats originate in developing countries and are aimed at developed countries. Therefore, rich countries should buy their security by offering money in the form of aid to poor countries, where all terrorists purportedly originate from.

26. I believe this premise is fundamentally flawed.

27. It is time States recognize that the issues are beyond poverty and unemployment; it is the underlying causes of terror and violence which need to be addressed vis-à-vis threats to security. Foreign occupation and alien domination, and the threat they pose to identity and dignity, are the major causes of terror and violence. It is not just Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine that prove this - other areas of conflict establish this self-same truth.

28. Related to this debate is the effort to have Member States arrive at a common definition of what constitutes terrorism. The United Nations has been working for some years now to elaborate a comprehensive convention against terrorism. Most of the substantive elements already enjoy agreement; the issue remains one of definition. To this end, the Secretary-General has proposed a definition of what acts would constitute terrorism, and has since pushed for States to agree on this definition. I must point out that the SG's definition seems to be closely related to that elaborated by countries of the West these last few years. On the part of Muslim nations, who have gathered under the banner of the OIC, while we can agree to all the elements the SG has proposed, we are calling for an additional two elements to also be included: first, that the definition must explicitly exclude acts carried out in the struggle for liberation from foreign occupation and alien domination and second, it must include acts of terror perpetrated or condoned by the State. Today, terrorism is undoubtedly the most important issue that needs to be dealt with by both the Western and Muslim worlds. Therefore, it is imperative that the OIC countries be consulted in order to find a comprehensive and acceptable definition on terrorism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

29. On the issue of weapons of mass destruction, the Secretary-General had initially concentrated on the non-proliferation issues, while we looked at the larger issues of disarmament, including of nuclear weapons. Fortunately, this omission has since been rectified following the insistence of non-Nuclear Weapon States. Malaysia on our part, would like to see even greater emphasis placed on the disarmament of nuclear weapons.

30. On development issues, which is undoubtedly, the most important issue for the developing countries, including the OIC as two third of the members of the OIC are categorized as least developed countries. We believe additional resources must be urgently found to assist developing countries achieve their development goals. The UN should fully support on-going efforts to identify new and innovative sources of development financing. The international financial system must also be reformed, not just to enhance the coherence, governance and consistency of the international

monetary, financial and trading systems but also to ensure that it would be for the benefit of developing countries. It is essential that the UN and the western countries give adequate attention to this matter. We cannot allow this group of developing countries to continue to be lagging behind in today's highly globalized world. Malaysia, in our own small way under the patronage of the Hon. Prime Minister has established the Capacity Building Programme for OIC countries to assist the low income and poor OIC countries to build their capacities in order to eradicate poverty and boost economic development. For a start, three projects will be implemented respectively in Bangladesh, Mauritania and Sierra Leone in the First phase of the Programme.

31. The other aspect that I would like to flag here is the calls on the rich countries to fulfill their obligation of contributing 0.7 per cent of their GDP as Official Development Assistance to developing countries. This is not a new undertaking - developed countries had agreed to undertake that obligation more than 30 years ago. Unfortunately, only five of them are fulfilling their commitment. It is important for the international community to ensure that there is an effective monitoring mechanism for the implementation of this commitment.

32. An important issue which I would like to touch on briefly is on the concept of 'responsibility to protect'. This is a basis for collective action against genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. As a region which has witnessed genocide during our times, namely that committed and perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, it is an issue of concern to us all as well. There remains a whole range of questions - legal, moral, operational and political - constituting this debate that need to be tackled. Malaysia is concerned over the possibility of double standards in the application of this principle, in particular, within a body that is the least democratic within the United Nations - the Security Council. I suggest that perhaps the Genocide Convention could be amended to include such a principle, rather than consider it within a body where veto exists.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

33. There is no doubt that the UN reform will impact greatly on the Muslim world. The task ahead is most challenging as there are many major issues that need to be addressed in the global agenda. But, I believe that the OIC can react to these global challenges and contribute towards a more peaceful and prosperous world. The OIC should rise to the challenges and cannot disappoint the Ummah. What I said may be very vocal to some but I do hope that it will jolt the Muslim world to take concrete action to improve the sad state of affairs of the Ummah. The time has come for the OIC member countries to stand for a just and equitable world so as to seek its rightful place on the world stage. We have to be part of the international mainstream so as to contribute effectively to the international agenda, especially on issues of interest to the Muslim world.

34. In conclusion, I hope that all of you have benefited in some small measure from this lecture and have a better understanding about the reform of the UN and some of the issues that are of concern to Malaysia as well as its impact to the Muslim world.

Thank you.