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Thank you, Mr. Co-Chairmen,

I would like to begin by thanking the Government of Finland for the excellent arrangements and the hospitalities extended to my delegation and I. The Governments of Finland and Tanzania are also to be commended for their efforts and leadership in steering the Helsinki Process to where it is now.

2. The Helsinki Process is indeed a very timely initiative, given the fact that governance issues, especially where they relate to globalisation and democracy at both the national and international levels, are two defining issues of our times. It is Malaysia's belief that all countries, big or small, North or South, rich or poor, can contribute in the efforts to introduce changes in the global governance system. It is for this reason that Malaysia had offered to be the facilitator for the issue of effective global governance.

3. While globalization has its good and bad sides, it is undeniable that the global governance process, embodied in the UN system, the Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO, needs to be changed, based on the principles of accountability, inclusion, transparency and engagement, if the globalization process is to be made more humane, the prevailing asymmetries of power are to be corrected and the lack of democratic practices at the international level are to be rectified. As we seek to enhance democratic practices at the national level, we should also seek to strengthen democratic practices in the decision making process at the international level.

4. Despite the creation of the UN 60 years ago, the international system is still characterised by inequality and injustice, where power rules over principle. As a result, there is a widespread and almost palpable sense of frustration with the way in which the world is being governed. Overtaken by their fear of terrorism, the powerful profess the rhetorics of multilateralism but practice unilateralism. Security considerations, however flawed, have become the overriding consideration in addressing various challenges confronting us.

5. The current global governance system suffers from two main deficits, namely the lack of representativeness and inclusion. However, it is also equally clear in my mind that the international system, as conceived by the founders of the United Nations and represented by the multilateral system, placed great emphasis on these two cardinal principles. This is manifested in the following facts:

One, The UN General Assembly operates on the basis of one country one vote;
Two, The Charter of the UN enshrines in the strongest possible terms, the principle of the sovereign equality of States.

6. Over a period of time however, these principles have been corroded and eroded. The Security Council has been in the ascendance to the extent that it has arrogated to itself powers, both formal and informal, extending far beyond what the UN Charter has prescribed. Even among the P5, the principle of first among equals seem to apply.

7. Therefore, committed as we all are to multilateralism on the basis of law and principle, I believe that the Friends of the Helsinki Process must work together to deepen and strengthen multilateralism. In this regard, the activities of the Helsinki Process must serve to complement the multilateral institutions, rather than sidelining them. We must contribute to the global search for practical solutions to the problem of global governance.

Co-Chairs,

8. These practical solutions must tackle the problems that we face at two levels, at the perceptual and substantive levels. At the perceptual level, in many countries, there is a clear crisis of confidence in the ability of governments and other institutions of power and authority such as the UN which are perceived as too beholden to the interests of the powerful states or even multinational corporations. There is a perception that these institutions are too divorced from the realities of everyday life, to resolve real life issues, provide inspiring and visionary leadership and moral authority. Certainly, there is an increased of expectation which the public now demands of its leaders.

9. Problems of perception also exist in respect of cultures. While we all decry the 'clash of civilisations' thesis and consistently reaffirm our commitment to intercultural and interfaith dialogue, in reality our knowledge and understanding of one another is limited, if not superficial. Paradoxically, while the Information Age, has facilitated greater connectivity and increased information about each other, there has not been a commensurate increase in understanding. We must change our times from being merely the Information Age to the Age of Knowledge and Understanding. To do so, we must first recognise that while the methods and instruments of science may be neutral, its contents which give meaning and life to scientific progress, are not. The contents of science are almost always a human conception and are therefore susceptible to the foibles of human nature.

10. We must also ensure that the spirit of tolerance, respect for diversity and pluralism permeates all of society, rather than certain strata only. There must be a willingness to respect diversity, rather than to impose a particular way of thinking. This has taken on a particular urgency given that in a globalizing world, no society can now claim to be mono-ethnic. Further, in an age where perception easily becomes reality, as reflected in the fight against terror, we must desist from the

tendency to stereotype certain ethnic groups, their faith and culture. Instead, what is required is a mindset change towards appreciation of diversity and pluralism. The multistakeholder approach of the Helsinki Process has an important role to play in this regard.

11. I believe that the Helsinki Process, given its non-ideological and multi-stakeholder and intercultural nature, operating on the basis of tolerance and inclusion, has much to contribute in addressing the perceptual problems related to governance and democracy, as I have outlined. I am therefore greatly heartened that intercultural dialogue has been identified as an issue which cuts across all of the Helsinki Process' activities.

Co-Chairs,

12. Problems at the substantive level are only too well known. By and large, these can be reduced to a few key elements, such as the marginalisation of the weak and oppression by the strong as well as the pervasive inequalities around us. In this connection, the 'Report of the World Situation 2005 : The Inequality Predicament' issued by the United Nations on 25 August 2005 states clearly that gaps between rich and poor have worsened compared to 10 years ago. Some 80 percent of the world's domestic product belongs to 1 billion people living in the developed world while the remaining 20 percent is shared by 5 billion living in developing countries. According to the UN Report, inequalities appear to accompany the globalisation process. Unless these inequalities are addressed effectively in the immediate future, there is every danger that a widespread feeling of injustice will give rise to even more violence and terror on a global scale.

13. The key to resolving these problems lie in tackling two main issues, namely an international economic system whose structure seem not only to perpetuate, but also exacerbate inequities, and to build national capacities.

14. The effects of the increases in oil prices are a clear manifestation of the economic inequities which mark our time. Developing countries, through no fault of their own, now have to bear a disproportionate amount of the burden resulting from increased oil prices. In some developing countries whose governments have to subsidise the cost of fuel, owing to the poverty of their people, now face a stark choice – either reduce or abolish the subsidies and risk anarchy, or continue with these subsidy and face bankruptcy. No government should be forced to make such a choice, particularly in light of the windfall profits accruing to the oil companies. Market forces cannot resolve the problems of society. The state cannot abandon its responsibility to govern and protect its people. Instead of discussing controversial issues such as the Responsibility to Protect, we would spend our time better by talking of the Responsibility to Govern. As responsible members of the international community, we need to work together to address the perennial problems faced by developing countries such as poverty, debt, lack of access to the markets of the North and financing for development.

15. At the same time, resolving these problems require domestic action, particularly capacity building through mass education. Only education can act as a force of equality and progress in any society. Given the importance of capacity building, I am pleased to note that this issue has also been identified as one which cuts across all spheres of the Helsinki Process' activities.

16. It should be noted that recommendations for solutions already exist. The world as a whole also has the wherewithal to overcome problems related to extreme deprivation. What is currently lacking is political will and perhaps most of all, courage and sustaining power.

Co-Chairs,

17. I would like to conclude by saying that there were also many detractors when the first Helsinki Conference was convened during the Cold War. Perhaps there are detractors now too, but history has proven that each journey no matter how long and hard, must begin with a first step. Malaysia is proud to be able to join other Friends of the Helsinki Process governments in this historic step.

Thank you.