

By : DATUK SERI SYED HAMID ALBAR
Venue : NEW YORK
Date : 19 SEPTEMBER 2005
Title : ADDRESS AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 60TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY I OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President,

Malaysia as the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement and in its own name, wishes to convey our congratulations to you on your election as the President of the 60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am confident that under your able stewardship, you will steer the Assembly to a successful conclusion. I wish to assure you of the fullest cooperation of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the Malaysian delegation.

2. Let me also pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, for his dedication and the successful manner in which he conducted the work of the 59th Session of the General Assembly, which was an exceptionally challenging one. The consultations and negotiations have led to the successful adoption of the final Outcome Document at the World Summit last Friday.

Mr. President,

3. It was six decades ago, when the peoples of the world, including those under oppression and colonialism, celebrated the creation of the United Nations. The UN, as envisaged by its founders, was a beacon of hope following the deaths and destruction wrought by the Second World War.

4. Malaysia fully and consistently subscribes to the centrality of the UN and with it the multilateral principles which had allowed the evolution of an international order predicated on a rule-based interaction among States, thus creating a predictable and stable international environment. In other words, without multilateralism, small and weak states could not hope for a democratic international order within which they could aspire for independence, peace and stability, development and prosperity.

5. Today, as we meet, multilateralism has come under increasing threat. Attempts to unilaterally re-write or re-define the normative framework is a dangerous experiment. Without the stabilizing effect of such a normative framework, we would only create uncertainty and confusion in the international order and environment.

6. The challenge confronting humankind in our times is to address, comprehensively and collectively the multifaceted threats to our survival and well-being, in the areas of peace and security, poverty and development, human rights and democracy.

7. In this regard, the Outcome Document has sought to give a fresh lease of life to multilateralism, both in substance and structure. As we continue our discussions to re- shape and re-direct the Organisation, we must ensure that the General Assembly remains the true embodiment of the will of the world community.

8. All of us must be committed to strengthen the General Assembly to reflect the true voice of democracy, transparency and accountability. At this juncture, let me voice Malaysia's support for the checklist of items to be implemented during the current session, as mapped out by the Secretary-General in his address last Saturday. I hope by the time we meet again this time next year, the Secretary-General's report will illustrate a marked improvement in the world situation, in particular towards achieving the MDGs by 2015 and the greater efficiency and effectiveness of the UN Secretariat.

9. Driven by a common sense of purpose and determined political will, we must operationalise the commitments we have undertaken in the major UN conferences and summits of recent years. Our words must be matched by our actions. This must represent the beginning of the re-doubling of efforts which we must all collectively make in order to secure a more peaceful and just world. Where we had been unable to push the agenda on certain issues, we must now pursue them as part of an on-going process in the reform of the UN. Where efforts to reach agreement had failed altogether, such as on the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation, we must now focus our energies in order to keep the issues alive until we achieve consensus.

Mr. President,

10. Malaysia is disappointed by the absence of reference to disarmament and non-proliferation in the Outcome Document. However, I hope it is not construed as a loss of interest by the international community, or that it has since fallen off our radar of concern. The larger community must not compromise on our collective call for nuclear weapon States to effect complete and general disarmament as well as to ensure the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

11. It is indeed regrettable that the 2005 NPT Review Conference earlier this year had failed. This failure would only serve to reinforce the adverse repercussions on the disarmament regime, which had been painstakingly negotiated since the end of the Second World War. We must therefore at this session reiterate and indeed reaffirm the importance of full and non-selective implementation of the three pillars of the Non- Proliferation Treaty, namely: nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear technology.

12. We must also rededicate our efforts towards the total elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

13. The world spent an estimated \$1 trillion dollars in global military expenditure last year. Doubtless, much of that went to strengthening military arsenals of States who feel constantly under threat; yet some of that must also have been contributed by terrorists purchasing arms for their condemnable acts. The sale of small arms and light weapons have wrought untold suffering on unsuspecting peoples everywhere. The international community must collectively call on States to divert such military spending to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and strengthening the development infrastructure. This would go far towards creating a just and equitable order, which in turn would lead to a safer world.

Mr. President,

14. Since the adoption of the MDGs five years ago, the burdens and obstacles faced by developing countries seem to have increased, with almost no amelioration of the problems which had already existed then. Eight years ago, East Asia was battered by a financial crisis, which in turn had trans-regional repercussions threatening the health of the global economy. Appeals by developing countries to reform the international financial architecture fell on deaf ears. As a result, the international financial architecture continues to be vulnerable to similar crises.

15. Now, even as that and other equally important problems remain unresolved, we are faced with yet another threat -the prolonged and sustained increase in oil prices, which even as we speak, threatens to imperil the global economy. Continuous increases in oil prices are placing a disproportionate burden on developing countries, hence impoverishing them even further. There is something fundamentally wrong with the current market system. It is morally reprehensible that the poor are expected to absorb the cost of instabilities of production. The unbridled free-market in particular are viewed as rapacious and unfeeling by many quarters of the global community.

16. If the UN is to remain relevant to the world at large, it must be able to discuss and decide on precisely issues such as these, which not only impact on our day-to-day life but which also have long-term implications, including on peace and security. If wars in the past were fought over ideology, conflicts in the future will be due to competition over markets and scarce natural resources, blurring the lines between economics, development and security. Accordingly, the UN must be prepared to address the inter- related and cross cutting issues which give rise to these conflicts.

17. Globalisation, with its myriad challenges and opportunities, has left many in the developing countries unable to compete in an open and free market system. Following the current trajectory, the international economic system will continue to remain unjust, punishing the poor for being unable to influence, much less dictate, their destinies. Much remains to be done to equalize the field between the rich and the rest. Aid and debt cancellation, while welcome and would reduce the burden of developing countries, have in the long term limited effect. It is trade that needs to be expanded and made more fair and equitable. We must press ahead towards a

universal, rule-based, open, non-discriminatory, fair and equitable multilateral trading system. It is widely recognized that trade has a multiplier effect, able to lift poor communities into becoming self-sustaining ones and progress into creating competitive markets which would benefit the international community.

Mr. President,

18. While we continue to grapple with problems of poverty and economic marginalisation, we are now increasingly faced with threats posed by terrorism. Malaysia condemns all acts, methods and practices of terrorism. As terrorism is a global phenomenon that transcends national boundaries, fighting terrorism demands effective international actions in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and universally recognized principles governing international relations and international law.

19. In countering terrorism, the use of conventional military force alone is insufficient. To truly address the scourge and prevent its re-emergence elsewhere and over time, we must deal with the root causes of terrorism in order to provide a lasting solution, which will deny those committing such acts of violence sympathy and gaining new recruits. While countering their actions, we must at the same time win the hearts and minds of the people to ensure that our victory will not be short-lived.

20. No one group acting alone will be able to achieve total success. Clearly, success requires a sense of common purpose. The portrayal of any particular grouping of peoples as fanatical terrorists or led by a religion of war is therefore irresponsible and would derail any attempt at forging a common and united front against terrorism. It is our collective duty to respond effectively to the legitimate grievances of the affected communities wherever they may be, to overcome their feelings of marginalization, deprivation, oppression and injustice. The international community as a whole must take a stand to stop actions which contribute, directly or indirectly, to the perpetuation of injustice, oppression or aggression against affected communities. Misunderstanding and fear of "the other" must be replaced by respect, dialogue, understanding and tolerance. In this context, we can build a universal culture that respect diversity for goodwill and harmony to thrive.

21. The interests and concerns of minority groups must not be sidelined in favour of the majority. Minorities too have rights, which must be protected by the Government. Perpetuated over time, the grievances of minority groups at being sidelined would necessarily seek an outlet.

22. There is a national as well as an international dimension to the issue of peaceful and cooperative co-existence, understanding and respect between religions, cultures and civilizations; they are not a one way traffic but should be administered on the basis of mutuality of interests to bring about dialogue and avoid conflicts. If Governments can succeed in instituting a culture of tolerance and moderation among people at the domestic level, it would become easy for nation states to cooperate in

promoting tolerance and moderation among nationalities and cultures at the international level. We must institute the precepts of justice, respect and understanding in our day-to-day dealings which in turn would lead to fairness, goodwill and harmony in our relations.

Mr. President,

23. The ideas of good governance, democracy and accountability to God and our peoples are not anti-thetical to Islam as they are clearly embodied in the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet Mohammed (s.a.w.). For our own part in Malaysia, we believe that the compulsion to act based on religious imperatives can be directed towards good, towards progress and development. We call this approach Islam Hadhari, literally Civilisational Islam, or an approach towards a progressive and humanistic Civilisation. It is thus consistent with the objective of creating a stable international world order.

24. The approach that Malaysia has taken emphasizes that progress and development, knowledge and good governance as enshrined in the teachings of Islam, is compatible with modernity and yet firmly rooted in the ethical, moral and universal values which will guarantee the future of humankind. It is an approach that values substance over form, promotes tolerance and understanding, moderation and peace, and certainly enlightenment.

Mr. President,

25. In our preoccupation with the reform of the United Nations, we must not lose sight of the need to urgently address and resolve one of the most important outstanding issues confronting this Organization -that of the Question of Palestine. While we all welcome the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, it should be part of the Road Map and should be quickly followed by similar measures in the West Bank. We must also deal seriously with the issue of settlements, including in and around Jerusalem, as well as the construction of the Separation Wall, which has already been pronounced illegal by the International Court of Justice. Such activities must cease forthwith if Israel is serious in contributing to the peace process and in fulfilling its obligations under the Road Map. The international community, particularly the United Nations, must continue to remain engaged with this issue until the goal of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine is realized.

Mr. President,

26. Rich or poor, strong or weak, regardless of religion and belief, one fact is inescapable -we inhabit one world, our global village. Sixty years ago, the founders of our universal Organization came together, after witnessing horrors hitherto unimaginable and said, never again shall human life be so wantonly extinguished. They also proclaimed that forevermore, humankind would work and live together in

peace, harmony and common respect. On this historic occasion, my plea is that we return to those hopes and ideals.

Thank you.