

Monday May 29, 2006

Full text of the PM's speech to the NAM meeting

Text of speech by Malaysia's Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi at the opening of the Ministerial Meeting of the Nonaligned Movement Coordinating Bureau on Monday at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by extending to you a warm welcome to Malaysia and to Putrajaya for this Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-aligned Movement. I trust that in the next two days you will have a fruitful exchange of views on issues of importance to the movement, within the framework of the theme of this Ministerial Meeting, which is "Towards a More Dynamic and Cohesive NAM: Challenges of the 21st Century".

2. This Ministerial Meeting is an important one, taking place barely four months before the Fourteenth Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the Non-aligned Countries in Havana, Cuba. At this meeting, you are expected to formulate appropriate strategies and approaches to protect and advance the interests of the movement.
3. We are all aware that the challenges facing the movement and the developing countries in general cover a wide spectrum of issues. They range from international politics and security to economics and trade, development, human rights, the environment, international terrorism to social and cultural issues, among others.
4. Many of these challenges are a consequence of the changes in the geo-political situation since the end of the Cold War. We now have to contend with a plethora of differing interests and conflicting loyalties among ourselves. This is because we also belong to other international, regional and sub-regional organizations. Needless to say, all of these have an impact on the unity, cohesion and solidarity within the movement.
5. Clearly these challenges must be addressed in a way that would ensure the continued relevance and viability of NAM to its member states. Of course, we need to strike a balance between national interests and the collective interests of the movement.
6. As chair of the movement, Malaysia has made considerable efforts to coordinate and revitalize the NAM, as enjoined by the "Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Continuing the Revitalization of the Non-aligned Movement". Among other measures, Malaysia has tried to improve the decision-making processes of NAM by making more effective use of new and existing mechanisms, such as the NAM Troika. We have tried to enhance coordination of NAM positions in the NAM Coordinating Bureau in New York and the NAM chapters in Geneva, Vienna and The Hague. We have promoted contacts and interaction with other groups and organizations, such as the G-77 and G8. We have also

facilitated on-line communication and interaction among NAM members by establishing the NAM E-secretariat portal.

7. It is commendable that NAM is generally united on broad matters of principles of importance to the movement. But we are sometimes unable to use our numerical strength to its best advantage. This poses a real challenge to the chair of the movement. We could have made a better impact on the reform and restructuring of the United Nations, on the 2005 Millennium Summit outcome and on the Millennium Declaration, but we did less than what we could have done.

8. It is now a new world with new realities. NAM has to adjust to these changes. Like other international organisations, such as the United Nations, it will have to reform itself. We can do this without abandoning the fundamental principles of the movement. For instance, we must remain at the forefront of the struggle of the south for a more just, equitable and peaceful world.

9. There is now a tendency to resort to unilateral action in international relations. We have noticed this tendency of working outside of the ambit of the United Nations when the sanction of the Security Council could not be obtained. This trend, if allowed to continue, would undermine the authority of the council and render it irrelevant, along with the rest of the U.N membership. It is therefore imperative that we oppose such trends and defend the principles enshrined in the U.N charter.

Ladies and gentlemen,

10. It is a sad commentary of our times that many of the ills of our colonial past still haunt our countries, such as poverty, backwardness, disease and ignorance. In some instances, they have been made worse with the onslaught of globalization. The fact has to be stated that the re-ordering of the priorities of the wealthy countries of the North over time has had an overall negative impact on the developmental process of the countries of the South.

11. The developing countries will have to establish new, and more effective strategic linkages or partnerships between and among themselves. We must also engage the willing partners of the North, in order to reap the full benefits of globalisation and minimise some of its more negative effects.

Ladies and gentlemen,

12. We are living in a world in which new conflicts arise even as existing ones have yet to be resolved. Violence begets violence. Extremism and violence at one end of the spectrum provoke a similar response at the other end. The world continues to teeter on the brink of a possible catastrophe. This could indeed come to pass unless effective measures are taken to deal with these crises before they get out of hand.

13. The international community is now engaged in the campaign against international terrorism. The results have been patchy at best as the adversaries are as nimble as they are ruthless. They prove to be elusive and resilient and remain a constant threat to the peace and tranquillity of the world. Unfortunately, instead of tackling the root causes, the actions of some of the big powers have caused alienation in critical segments of the international public. This is especially because many actions are in clear violation of international law and the norms of civilized conduct. In fact, they caused the ranks of international terrorism to swell in the process.

14. I have always maintained that military action alone will never be sufficient to defeat terrorism. Terrorism must not be dealt with in an arbitrary, selective and cavalier manner, but holistically. All aspects of the problem, including the critical issue of root causes must be addressed. This must be done within a framework of international law, without selectivity and double standards. Indeed, the problem is best dealt with through the United Nations with the voluntary and full cooperation of all members of the international community.

Ladies and gentlemen,

15. The situation in Iraq remains very unsettling even three years after the invasion of that member state of NAM, and four months after its general elections which is intended to be part of the process of bringing back normalcy to that country.

16. The international community has a big stake in Iraq. Let us hope that the lessons of Iraq would be well learnt so that such unnecessary intervention would not be repeated in other parts of the world, whatever the "justification".

17. The overall objective on the question of Iraq must be the restoration of, and respect for, the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Iraqi nation. There must be the speedy return of full sovereignty to Iraq whereby its government will exercise complete and absolute authority over all national affairs, including those pertaining to political, security and economic matters. They should include decisions regarding foreign military presence and assistance. We know that this is the desire of the Iraqi people which the movement fully supports.

18. Therefore, there must be a general and complete ceasefire all round. The people of Iraq, representing all factions and ethnic groups, must be assisted to work towards establishing a government of national unity. Only then can real peace and normalcy return to Iraq, allowing foreign forces to leave the country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

19. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict remains one of the most profound tragedies of our time. The so-called "peace process" now lies in tatters. We continue to witness the brutal occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel, and the appalling daily sufferings of the

inhabitants living under foreign occupation - all in the name of ensuring security for Israelis, including those who stay illegally on Arab lands.

It is patently clear to all that there will be no solution to the conflict unless the legitimate aspirations and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people are fulfilled. Peace cannot be built on the continued occupation of other people's lands. Peace cannot come unless the Palestinians are free to exercise their human and political rights, including rights to economic activity. The problem must be resolved justly, morally and in accordance with international law, UN Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and other relevant U.N resolutions, with both Palestinians and Israelis having their own state within secure borders. But first, the Palestinians must be saved from severe deprivations following the current action by donors to stop the flow of aid to Palestine.

20. It is imperative that the members of the International Quartet fulfil their obligations to ensure the full implementation of their road map for peace in the Middle East. As "honest brokers", they must not support any unilateral measure taken by one party to the conflict at the expense of the other.

21. The international community must respect the choice of the Palestinian people who had exercised their democratic right and free will by handing victory to Hamas in the recent elections. Support for democracy should be manifested consistently, not selectively or preferentially. The leadership of Hamas must be engaged through contacts and dialogue, not shunned or ostracised and sanctioned. Certainly, the denial of the much-needed international aid to the hapless Palestinian people is unconscionable and likely to be counter-productive to an early solution to the conflict.

22. The parties to the conflict must also make a sober and realistic assessment of the current situation and make serious efforts towards peace and reconciliation. They must eschew the path of violent conflict for one of dialogue and conciliation. Hope must be restored on both sides, particularly the Palestinians who are on the point of utter despair after two generations of endless suffering. Clearly, the United Nations, especially the Security Council, has a crucial role and responsibility in the resolution of this problem and must be more pro-active, rather than merely reactive, in dealing with the issue.

Ladies and gentlemen,

23. The situation in Afghanistan is also a matter of grave concern to the international community. Only a strong central authority would be able to ensure the future peace, stability and prosperity of the long-suffering Afghan people. Much more resources need to be made available to Afghanistan before it could stand on its own feet. Afghanistan cannot forever be propped up by a foreign military presence.

24. The situation in Iraq, in Palestine and in Afghanistan, once resolved, will have a defining effect on the fight against terrorism and indeed on the slide in the relations between the West and the Islamic world as a whole.

Ladies and gentlemen,

25. On the issue of disarmament, we must continue to insist on a balanced approach between nuclear disarmament and nuclear non proliferation. Nuclear-weapon-states must honour their commitments towards nuclear disarmament and the ultimate goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

26. The movement must galvanise international efforts towards the systematic reduction and eventual elimination of these awful weapons of mass destruction. This is particularly important at this point in time when the disarmament agenda has been effectively sidelined, with no progress being made either at the recent N.P.T Review Conference or at the Conference on Disarmament which has not moved forward in a decade.

27. NAM must oppose the introduction of new and dangerous military doctrines, including on the use of tactical nuclear weapons, which are being floated by some quarters. We must strongly oppose any attempt to lower the threshold on the possible use or threat of use of these weapons. They would seriously undermine the global disarmament efforts, with all its attendant risks to international security.

28. On the related issue of nuclear technology, NAM has and will continue to defend the basic and inalienable right of all states parties of the N.P.T to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. They should be allowed to do so without any discrimination, and in conformity with their safeguards agreements as required by the N.P.T.

29. There should not be any selectivity or double standards. There should only be one set of rules for all. Allowing Israel to develop nuclear weapons with impunity - which it does not deny - while others in the region are prohibited from doing so, is a blatant case of double standard. It has created a destabilizing asymmetry in a volatile part of the world.

30. It is the fervent hope of the NAM that the issue of Iran's nuclear technology programme would be settled through diplomacy, which should be given every chance to succeed. Malaysia fully supports this position. In this matter, we must recognize Iran's right to develop such technology for peaceful purposes.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

31. We live in a time of uncertainty and change. New concepts and doctrines have been foisted on us, including such notions as "humanitarian intervention", "responsibility to protect" and "pre-emptive war", among others. All of these pose a challenge to traditional and universally accepted concepts enshrined in the UN charter. We must uphold the importance of adhering to the principles of the UN charter. We should strongly oppose any attempts at eroding them. We should support efforts towards the peaceful resolution of international conflicts through dialogue and negotiations rather than the use of force. We should steadfastly uphold the fundamental principles regarding the sovereignty and inviolability of states.

32. The future of the developing countries, indeed, the entire world, lies best in an international order that is based on active multilateralism. It should not be domination by one country or a group of countries. It should observe international laws and norms. International relations should be based on a more equitable and just system that ensures a more prosperous, secure and peaceful world. It is therefore in our fundamental interest to work for an international system that guarantees equitable rights and benefits for all countries, not just a few.

33. NAM must assert its role and use the leverage of its large membership to help refashion the international system that would best protect, preserve, and promote our collective interests within the essential framework of multilateralism. We must also develop a capability for the resolution of our conflicts, perhaps through regional or sub-regional mechanisms.

34. The reform and restructuring process of the United Nations must be done in earnest, not in an arbitrary, selective and self-serving manner. It is pointless to apportion blame on the UN when the real culprits are the member states, especially the influential ones, which have it in their power to strengthen or weaken the world body. We must ensure that the reform of the U.N leads to the strengthening of the multilateral process, not its weakening, a more open and democratic decision-making process, and the empowering of the General Assembly rather than the further strengthening of the Security Council which has become the tool of the strong and the powerful.

Ladies and gentlemen,

35. We must redouble our efforts to co-opt civil society in recognition of their positive role and contribution. To avoid unwarranted external interference in our domestic affairs, it is imperative that we put our own houses in order.

36. On the issue of human rights, there should be no politicization, no selectivity and no double standards in the work of the newly established Human Rights Council. The domestic political agenda of states should not be brought to bear, for it was this which led the defunct commission on human rights to digress from its fundamental mandate. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank NAM members for supporting Malaysia's candidature in the elections to the new council.

37. Domestically, we must reform ourselves by instituting concrete measures to combat corruption, promote good governance and accountability. Corruption must be wiped out because it benefits only a few at the expense of the many.

Ladies and gentlemen,

38. In order to maximise our collective potentials, NAM and the G-77 and China must forge closer cooperation and coordination through a pooling of resources, and whenever necessary joint programmes and strategies, including a more effective division of labour, particularly in respect of the follow up to the Millennium Summit decisions. For this

purpose, more use should be made of the mechanism of the Joint Coordinating Committee. To be effective, we cannot afford to continue to function disparately. Instead, we must enhance our synergies.

39. In recognising the vicious cycle that exists between poverty and marginalisation, we must make every effort through more coordinated and concerted action among ourselves. In the dialogue with our partners in the north, we must ensure that the developing countries do not continue to be marginalised. Our concerns and our voice on issues of importance to us must be raised and heard in the councils of the rich and powerful, such as the G8.

40. We should also recognise the critical element of inclusiveness in breaking that vicious cycle and on the importance of the contribution of all sectors of our societies. This includes women. In this regard, I am gratified that the NAM Ministerial Meeting on the Advancement of Women, which was held in Putrajaya in May 2005, had endorsed Malaysia's proposal to establish a NAM Centre on Gender and Development in Malaysia. I am pleased to announce that this centre is in the process of being established and would conduct its first training course shortly. It is hoped that the centre will serve as an international institution of excellence dedicated to enhancing the development and empowerment of women through a lifelong learning approach.

41. We should also strengthen cooperation in capacity-building through sharing experiences and expertise. Malaysia has done its modest share in this area through the mechanism of the Malaysia Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP), which currently involves 135 countries, with 34 technical institutes in Malaysia offering a total of 122 training programmes. I would urge other NAM members that have similar cooperation programmes, or which have the capacity to do so, to be more pro-active and to continue to look at new and more innovative ways of promoting technical cooperation among developing countries.

42. We must enhance our trade in the context of South-South cooperation, as well as synergise with our partners in the north, as a means by which the developing countries can escape marginalisation and enter into the mainstream of the international trading system. The enhancement of South-South trade is not a pie in the sky but an entirely attainable objective, if we work at it.

43. Success in South-South trade would depend, among others, on a conscious and systematic promotion effort, a supportive and pro-active role by governments, and increased involvement of the private sector which should serve as the locomotive for South-South economic relations.

44. We must create the dynamics for a sustainable programme of cooperation and economically strategic relationships among developing countries, with the cooperation and support of important partners of the north on the basis of mutuality of benefits and advantages. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

45. We do acknowledge the enormous contributions that have been made by the non-aligned movement for the betterment of the world we live in. Many goals have been achieved, but others have remained unfulfilled or not fully attained. However, in this vastly changed geo-political environment, NAM must remain as a beacon of hope and promise for its members, whose peoples make up a large proportion of the world's population.

46. NAM must remain relevant as a forum of the developing countries. It must continue to speak up and speak out on issues of importance and concern to its members, without fear or favour. It must continue to be a strong defender and promoter of international law and of the sanctity of the rule of law in international relations. NAM must continue to be an ardent supporter of the United Nations as the indispensable guarantor of the rights of all states and as the vehicle of multilateralism.

47. We must resolve to translate our pronouncements into concrete action. Drawing strength in our numbers, we should have the legitimacy and credibility to move forward in advancing our common cause and achieving our common goals.

48. NAM cannot afford to remain static or reactive. It must be dynamic and move with the times. It must have the courage to change, while remaining true to the core values of the movement.

49. I wish all of you every success in your deliberations.

I thank you for your attention.