



Permanent Mission of
Malaysia
to the United Nations

Statement by

The Honourable Dato' Mustapa Mohamed
Minister in the Prime Minister's Department of Malaysia

at

The High- Level Segment of the Economic
and Social Council (ECOSOC),
United Nations, New York

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(Please check against delivery)

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are meeting here today at a crucial time in the history of the United Nations and its active involvement in development issues. It is therefore timely and pertinent that we meet in the ECOSOC to further solidify our efforts in bringing about a world free of poverty and extreme deprivation.

2. The theme that we are discussing, namely 'Towards achieving internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Development Declaration' is a very important one, especially when we consider the fact that in September our leaders would gather in New York to achieve agreement on reforming the United Nations as a means of realizing the aspiration of the founders of the Organization sixty years ago to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

3. The MDGs, which reflect our shared commitment and vision in making poverty history. Historic as it is, we should recognize that the goals and targets contained therein constitute the minimum that needs to be achieved. Let us all be clear. While the MDGs' great merit is the strength that it possesses is based on the lowest common denominator. From this perspective, it failed to address all systemic issues critical to sustained growth, such as the impact of globalization as well as greater participation of developing countries in global governance that impact on our efforts to achieve a life of dignity for all. As the Secretary General himself said in his report, the MDGs do not themselves present a "complete development agenda". In spite of the minimum targets contained in the MDGs, We have heard at this meeting the numerous challenges facing many countries in terms of resource requirements. Indeed, according to some estimates, at the pace at which we are proceeding, the reduction of the child mortality target in sub-Saharan Africa will not be achieved in 2015 as envisaged in the MDGs, but only 150 years later. This fact leads us to one conclusion - mankind's ability to empathize with one another is more real in its conception than in its execution.

Mr. President,

4. Let us not however dwell on cynicism and despair. Recent experiences have shown that the fight against poverty can be won. In large swathes of the world, poverty is in retreat. The experience in China and India is proof of this. Malaysia's own experience in achieving the targets well ahead of 2015 has shown that with the right sequencing of economic and social policies, these can be done. Our own GNP per capita has risen more than ten fold from US\$370 at independence in 1957 to about US\$4,500 today. While more than half of Malaysian households lived below the poverty line in 1970, the rate of poverty is about 5 percent today. As for other MDG targets, the percentage of school children completing primary school had reached 97 percent. Malaysia's infant and child mortality rate are currently 6.2 and 8.6 percent respectively per one thousand live birth are now comparable to those of highly developed countries. Malaysia has indeed exceeded all but one of the MDG broad targets.

5. In Malaysia's experience, political will and domestic capacity building in all its dimensions are among the main prerequisites for these targets to be achieved. But political will should not be confined to governments alone – it must permeate all levels of

society. If this is to be achieved, it is essential to foster a sense of ownership and common destiny among the peoples which in turn, requires that policies and approaches be based on the principle of inclusion of all. Indeed, to the largest extent possible, the public must be involved in the decision making process, not only through political, but administrative avenues as well. Involvement by the Government, the private sector and civil society are important. Applying the principle of inclusion of all also means that the benefits of growth must be equitably distributed. A policy of growth with equity is essential to ensure political, economic and social stability. The road to development is not only challenging, but it is tedious as well, for at the end of the day, it requires planning, implementation, monitoring and plain hard work, as well as the courage to stay the course.

6. At the same time, it is important to ensure that gains achieved are consolidated and built upon. Therefore, in welcoming the focus on the least developed countries, particularly those in Africa, I believe that the international community must also ensure that middle income countries which have achieved significant progress, should not be allowed to relapse to their former precarious positions, owing to extraneous factors such as a hostile international economic environment and failure to walk the talk on the part of donor countries.

Mr. President,

7. I would now like to take this opportunity to offer some thoughts on how the internationally agreed development goals could be achieved. These are in the area of financing for development, coherence and the social underpinnings of economic growth. The deliberations during the past two days during the High – Level Dialogue on Financing for Development, have engendered agreement on three main points. One, development is not achievable in the absence of adequate, sustained and predictable flows of ODA and foreign direct investment. Two, the Monterrey Consensus is the right framework to achieve this. Three, the main issue that needs to be addressed in the context of the Monterrey Consensus is the implementation deficit.

8. On the implementation issue, Malaysia welcomes the adoption by the EU of a timetable for increasing the levels of funding for ODA to reach the 0.7 percent target by 2015. In this connection, I would like to recall that in the Plan of Action adopted at the recent Second South Summit in Doha, there is a proposal to establish an effective monitoring mechanism to ensure that the internationally agreed targets for ODA allocation by the developed countries are met. I firmly believe that such a monitoring mechanism would serve to provide greater impetus to efforts to increase sources of financing for development. I believe that the ECOSOC can play a role in this regard in collaboration with other relevant bodies and organizations.

9. Emphasis should also be given to issues of coherence, which should be given consideration at three levels. Firstly, at the level of the donor countries, we should ensure that what the right hand gives is not taken away by the left hand. Secondly, there should exist coherence in the policies of the developing countries, which would go a long way in maximizing aid effectiveness. Thirdly, coherence should prevail at the level of multilateral institutions, in particular in the UN, the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) and the WTO. In this regard, ECOSOC as a principal organ of the United Nations, has an important role in ensuring greater coherence and coordination among these institutions. The High Level

Plenary of the General Assembly in September should provide the opportunity for agreement to be achieved to strengthen ECOSOC.

10. Malaysia's own experience has shown that improvement in the quality of life is due very much to appropriate social policies as well as economic growth. Certainly, economic growth alone provides no guarantee that the people, especially those in the rural areas will have access to adequate social services, which is the key to having a decent quality of life. With this in mind, I would like to suggest that the United Nations and its specialized agencies undertake studies to examine more closely the mechanisms by which social expenditures can contribute towards the development process.

Mr. President,

11. I truly believe that we can make a difference in the coming few months. Let us hope that there will be definite and concrete progress at the forthcoming High Level Plenary in terms of commitments and the will to implement them so that the challenge of development – poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, marginalization and joblessness can be overcome. Let us thus seize the moment that history has thrust upon us. Let us not forget that the United Nations was born in a period of hopes and ideals. It is these hopes and ideals that we should return to now and in September.

Thank you.