

STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE TUN DR. MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD

PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

AT THE XVIII SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

“UPHOLDING THE BANDUNG PRINCIPLES TO ENSURE CONCERTED AND ADEQUATE RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD”

25 OCTOBER 2019, BAKU CONGRESS CENTER, AZERBAIJAN

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

Mr. Chairman His Excellency Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan,

Honourable Heads of State and Government,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. First and foremost, I wish to extend my heartiest congratulations to the Republic of Azerbaijan for assuming the chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement and for hosting this Summit. I thank Azerbaijan for the warm hospitality accorded to my delegation as well as the excellent arrangements made for this event.

2. At the same time, I wish to express our sincere appreciation to Venezuela for chairing and steering the work of the Movement over the past three years.

Mr. Chairman,

3. I am truly honoured to be here at this year's summit. The last time I addressed this event was in 2003, when Malaysia was Chair of the Movement. It was 16 years ago and much has changed since then.

4. Today, I am here to speak on the topic of “Upholding the Bandung Principles to Ensure Concerted and Adequate Response to the Challenges of the Contemporary World”.

5. The Bandung Principles were framed more than six decades ago and obviously so much more would have changed since then. Yet, we are reverting to these principles and it could only mean that they either timeless or had managed to remain relevant until today.

6. To my mind, we owe it to the wisdom of the founding fathers that saw how important it was to have an independent group of nations that refused to be dragged into either side of the Cold War and to a certain degree act as a stabilising entity between the two blocs.

7. The Cold War may be over and ideological differences may not contribute to diplomatic rows anymore but the world is still not peaceful. We may also not witness another great war, at least not just yet, but the destructions and casualties from smaller wars, civil wars, invasions, insurgencies and occupations are equally devastating if not worse. Of course, modern and sophisticated weapons contributed much to this end.

8. It is against this backdrop that we gather here today hoping to find rhyme and reason to deal with the challenges of the contemporary world.

Mr. Chairman,

CURRENT STATE OF WORLD AFFAIRS

9. Back in 2003, I said, "The world lives in fear". It was said at a time when the statement that "you are either with us or against us" became a catch phrase to bully small and peaceful nations into supporting and justifying military actions against another country alleging that it is a threat to the rest of the world. It was said just a few weeks before Iraq was invaded.

10. All that was required to justify attack was to accuse Iraq, of hoarding weapons of mass destructions or WMDs. The invasion was launched, the nation utterly devastated and then occupied. By then, the military operation is multilateral when like-minded, hawkish nations were roped in, forming the so-called Coalition of the Willing, a benign name for a terrible warring bloc.

11. Post invasion, no WMDs were discovered and that was it. The nation was utterly destroyed and instead of remorse and putting in efforts to remedy the destruction, the nation's wealth was instead plundered and shared among those involved as spoils of war.

12. That was the reason why I said that the world lived in fear, any nation which decides to oppose the belligerent and bullying ways of the powerful nations risked being invaded and pummelled to a pulp. And these military operations will proceed even without UN sanction.

13. That was 16 years ago. Do we still live in such fear? Judging by what had happened especially in the Middle-east post the Iraqi invasion, I have no doubt that the unilateral and "bloc" belligerence are still very prevalent and the approach had become more complex. We have witnessed how regime change and exporting democracy had caused nations and modern-day civilisations wasted and crumbled.

14. Some of our NAM members have gone through this and others among us may suffer similar fate in the future, God forbids.

TERRORISM

15. On terrorism, we are now plagued with terrorism. It is not decreasing. It is mounting. And now the whole world is exposed to terror attacks. We call it terrorism if they are done by unorganised entities. But, states also are liable for increasing terrorism in many countries, many places.

16. Terrorism cannot be fought militarily or in other ways. Terrorism must be fought through reason. There must be a reason for people who are willing to tie bombs to their body and blow themselves up. No sane people would do that, unless of course they are very angry and very frustrated.

17. They do so because other means are not open to them to solve the problems that they face. Their countries had been occupied and they had no other means of getting back their countries because they are not countries with armed forces of the kind that they have to fight against.

18. So until we resolve, until we find the reasons for the conduct of terrorism, and we attend to those reasons, and cure them, terrorism is going to continue and it will even mount to affect all the countries of this world.

19. So I would urge countries which are interested in reducing terrorism to find out why they should do all these nasty things. There must be a reason for their doings and once we discover the reason and attend to those reasons then it may be possible for terrorism to be reduced or even eliminated.

Mr. Chairman,

THE IMPACT OF THE TRADE WAR

20. While the threat of war looms over our heads, trade disputes which are fast turning into trade wars are causing havoc on our economies.

21. The uncertainties they caused have led to nations becoming unable to plan and develop their countries, impoverishing their peoples and causing social disorders that are capable of giving rise to civil strifes, insurgencies and conflicts.

22. The trade wars are proving to be equally damaging and devastating and using trade as a weapon today is an insidious way of choking nations out of their lives.

23. I believe the increasingly damaging and protracted trade dispute has left Malaysia and other nations wondering when will it end and what kind of devastations will be left in its wake.

24. Whether we like it or not, a trade war between the world's largest economies is bound to fracture the world trading system. Businesses need to plan smoothly and avoid disruption. But tariffs, counter-tariffs and other impediments to free trade may now become the "new normal".

25. The US-China mega-trade war may be a symptom of something far worse – growing rivalry between the world's two biggest powers, lasting indefinitely. And as I've said before, even if geostrategic rivalry is not already behind their current trade dispute, it is likely to result from a prolonged trade dispute on a global scale.

26. Unfortunately, for Malaysia, we are caught in the middle. Economically we are linked to both markets, and physically we are also caught in between because of our geographical location.

27. We have cautioned our ASEAN neighbours on the need to cushion the impact of the superpower collision by enhancing our national resilience. This means building capacity by developing our competitiveness. To our NAM friends, I believe we must all do likewise.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Honourable Delegates,

CRIMINALISING WAR AND WAR NOT A SOLUTION TO DISPUTES

28. When I spoke at the United Nations recently, I shared with the delegates that Malaysia had launched a campaign to criminalise war. The basis of the campaign is that it is ridiculous to hang a murderer for killing one person but to glorify the people who are responsible for the deaths of millions of people.

29. As we are all aware, modern wars are total in every way for not only will combatants be killed but innocent people – the children, the sick and incapacitated will be casualties as well. On top of that, whole countries are devastated, and trillions of dollars lost. In the end, both the victors and losers will suffer.

30. As such, while we consider ourselves civilised, we are however still very primitive since we accept killing people as a way to settle disputes between nations or within nations.

31. We believe there are other ways of settling disputes. We can negotiate or submit to arbitration by third parties. Or we can resort to the courts of law – the World Court, the International Court of Justice for example. And we say this because Malaysia does not just talk. We do. We settle disputes

with our neighbours through negotiation and through the World Court. We won some and we lost some. But no one has been killed.

32. Indeed, when one goes to court one does not always get what one believes is rightfully ours. The same can be said with war. We do not always win. In a contest between two parties, one must lose if the other is to win. But if we use peaceful means we can still lose but it will cost us much less. No one would die, nor land devastated.

Mr. Chairman,

PALESTINE

33. I would like to bring to this occasion on the fate of what awaits our poor Palestinian brothers. Palestine remains occupied by a brutal regime. This regime continues to expand illegal settlements on land that rightfully belongs to the Palestinians. Worst still Israel has announced that it intends to annex parts of the West Bank – a move that clearly violates international law.

34. Israel has claimed that Jerusalem is now their capital. Many western countries are supporting this move by relocating or vowing to relocate their embassies there. Malaysia does not agree with this. We urge NAM member countries that have relocated to Jerusalem or are planning to do so to reconsider their decision.

35. On our part, Malaysia will open an embassy accredited to Palestine. We know that Israel will not allow Malaysia to open an embassy in the Occupied Territory. As such, we will open the embassy in Jordan. This would allow us to extend aid to the Palestinians more easily. But Israel will find a way to ensure no aid reaches Palestine.

36. It is clear what the regime wants. Every day, it is working on how to choke the life out of Palestine and the Palestinians, and one cruel and inhuman approach is to confiscate more and more Palestinian land until there is no more left. Yet, the international community does nothing. The international community is unable to do anything.

37. It is unfortunate that a world organisation set up by the powerful nations now see those very people ignoring the resolutions of that world body. Now we see others doing the same.

Mr. Chairman,

NAM MUST BE UNITED

38. Since I last spoke, I have noticed that the Movement is not what it used to be. Before, NAM used to speak as one. We were united in our stand, bound by the 10 Bandung Principles. We spoke courageously and clearly about respecting sovereign equality, territorial integrity and independence of states. We defended principles of justice and international law. We unquestionably respected the right to self-determination. We did all this and more by working together. Unfortunately, this is not the case anymore.

39. We are fragmented. We are divided not because we do not believe in our shared values or principles, but because we have been tempted by the promise of economic benefits or favourable trade conditions. We have been enticed by some of the powerful countries. Either that, or we have been frightened to the extent of bending to the will of the powerful. They have threatened us with punitive measures such as embargoes or sanctions, or even worse.

40. We are no longer united. Instead, we bicker with each other. We take every opportunity to speak up against the other.

41. I am sure we have our differences, as we have always had. But those differences can be resolved through dialogue and negotiations. There are peaceful means available and we should make use of them.

42. We should not give in to the powerful countries and give them the satisfaction of seeing us divided. This would only empower them further to continue their war-mongering and oppressive ways. And that is what has led us to where we are right now.

Mr. Chairman,

43. The theme of this year's Summit, "Upholding the Bandung Principles to ensure concerted and adequate response to the challenges of the contemporary world" is fitting indeed. In the dangerous world we currently live in, we must defend and champion the 10 principles of the 1955 Bandung Conference. But, we must do this together. Only then can we continue to revive the Movement towards meeting its objectives. Only then can we put a stop to the injustices that we see today. Only then can we see a stable, peaceful and harmonious world.

44. And only then can we, the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, stand tall and proud that we are not lackeys of the bullying and arrogant nations.

I thank you.