



Permanent Mission of
Malaysia
to the United Nations

STATEMENT BY
THE HONOURABLE ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI
PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA
DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 62ND SESSION OF THE UNGA
NEW YORK, 28 SEPTEMBER 2007

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, on your election as the President of the 62nd Session of the U.N.G.A. Malaysia will work with you towards realizing the objectives of this Organization, particularly in working towards conferring more power to the General Assembly in managing the affairs of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

2. The course of human history is marked by a few pivotal moments, during which we can make the correct or wrong decisions that will impact on the destinies of those who come after us. We are now living in such a time.

3. There are certain problems which touch all our lives without exception. The change in climate and the increasing discord between cultures and civilizations are two such problems. The first problem is now globally affecting the wellbeing of the planet earth; while the second is threatening to tear apart the fabric of peaceful relations between peoples and nations.

4. Let me first say something about climate change. We are now fully aware of the gravity as well as the immediacy of the situation. Natural disasters and other extremities in the weather conditions are occurring now, often in parts of the world which never before experienced such calamities. The worst is yet to come. Indeed, the 2007 Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has made it clear that the scale and urgency of the challenge is greater than we had thought, and feared.

Mr. President,

5. In December this year, Indonesia will be hosting, in Bali, the 13th Conference of Parties of the U.N Framework Convention on Climate Change. We must agree to launch the process for negotiations on a post-2012 agreement. Ongoing national or regional initiatives to deal with climate change must not compete with, and should instead complement, the negotiations under the U.N framework. Malaysia will give full support to Indonesia to ensure that the Conference in Bali achieve the success that it deserves.

6. We need to achieve consensus on certain fundamental issues even before the negotiations begin for a post-2012 agreement. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities must prevail. We must recognize the fact that the poorest countries of the world have the least capacity to adapt, and should therefore be apportioned the least responsibility to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

7. A post-2012 agreement needs to build upon the architecture and other fundamentals of the Kyoto Protocol. For example, there should be absolute emission reduction targets for developed countries, expanded mechanisms that facilitate contributions from developing countries as well as special provisions for the least developed countries and small island developing states. We know that climate change has implications not only for the environment but also the global economy. This is an important additional reason why the principle of differentiated responsibilities must apply, so that the developing countries can maintain their capacities for sustainable development. Of course, in the management of climate change the developing countries have their part to play, but it must be commensurate with their abilities to perform.

8. On this subject, we must never forget the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, where it all began. Caring for the environment and ensuring sustainable development was the theme of that global conference. And the message of that Summit was - nothing less than a transformation of our attitude and behaviour would bring about the necessary changes. These truths remain, and they should guide us as we begin the process of negotiations for the post-2012 agreement on climate change.

Mr. President,

9. Let me now turn to the problem of the discord that is growing between Islam in general and the west as a whole. The main cause is the misperception in the West that Islam promotes exclusivity and encourages extremism. We must take action to generate greater understanding between the followers of different cultural and civilizational traditions. Malaysia fully supports the various efforts being made at the international level. We are confident that such dialogues will establish the truth that Islam is a religion which espouses universalism not exclusivity, tolerance not bigotry.

10. Malaysia is equally convinced that it is wrong to put the blame on religion as the cause of the existing disputes between nations. All genuine religions advocate peace and harmony among peoples as well as acceptance of others. This is certainly the case with Islam which teaches its believers to practise tolerance, forgiveness, peace, fraternity and coexistence. The Quran, which is the written foundation of the religion of Islam, is very explicit in recognizing the existence of religions other than Islam.

11. That religion is not the root cause of the world's troubles has been confirmed by the Report of the High-level Group of the Alliance of Civilizations, released on 13 November 2006. The Report maintains that although religion is often cynically exploited to stir passions, fuel suspicions and support alarmist claims that the world is facing a new "war of religions", the root of the matter is political, not religious. We should give support to various initiatives at the national and regional levels to carry forward the message and recommendations of the 2006 Report.

12. Nevertheless, it is Malaysia's view that such national or regional initiatives must finally culminate in a truly universal dialogue based in the multilateral inter-governmental process. It is only such a process which can establish binding commitments. Indeed, success of such a dialogue has now become an important caveat for securing the wider goals of global peace, security and prosperity.

Mr. President,

13. There is a tendency to blame history, but there is no evidence in history which point to religion as the cause for the current discord between cultures and civilizations. It is not the explanation for the existence of conflicts between western and Muslim countries. The answer lies in more recent times, which is the repeated use of force by the powerful over the weak to secure strategic or territorial gains. The vestiges of these wars for control and domination persist today as gnawing problems in Afghanistan, Lebanon, the Golan Heights and Iraq.

14. Speaking about Iraq, Mr. President, we cannot deny the fact that much of the problems now confronting the people of Iraq originates from foreign occupation of that great country. The Iraqis should be given the full opportunity to determine their own future. For this purpose, Iraq needs a government of national unity which can be accomplished through national reconciliation. Mr. President, I put great emphasis on national unity because it has been our experience in Malaysia that national unity is best achieved through the practice of power sharing in a government in which ethnic groups of different religious faiths are represented. This government has succeeded in bringing peace and prosperity to the country for the last 50 years of Malaysia's independence. The international community has a clear responsibility to assist the people of Iraq achieve peace and stability, so that the unity of Iraq as a nation is preserved and the territorial integrity of Iraq as a state is not compromised.

Mr. President,

15. With equal candor, I must also say that the problem of Palestine, which has been festering for sixty years for a solution to be found, tops the list of grievances which the Islamic world holds against the west.

16. We are all aware that there are fresh initiatives to bring Israel and Palestine, together with other states, for high-level peace talks in the very near future. Although I take the position that any final settlement of the issue of Palestine must necessarily take place within the framework of the United Nations, let us give support to the peace talks and hope that they create momentum for a true meeting of minds to take place. In particular, we should urge the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to act courageously to meet the needs and expectations of their peoples who have suffered long enough. Of course, real peace can only be achieved if the legitimate rights of peoples are recognized and protected during the negotiations. Palestine had been partitioned before. This should never happen again.

17. All of us must play the role of honest brokers, assisting them through a difficult negotiating process on the path towards true peace. Both sides to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must commit to reaching solutions through compromise. This opportunity must be seized. The onus of delivery is on all of us.

Mr. President,

18. I do believe that the single most important issue lying in the way of peace and fraternity between Islamic and western countries is the unsettled problem of Palestine. I am equally certain that once the problem of Palestine is settled, there will be greater harmony between western and Islamic countries, the inheritors of the world's two great religions and civilizations.

19. On their part, Muslims do have a responsibility to present to the world, the true face of Islam. It must be made clear to all that Islam is a religion which abhors conflicts, more so between Muslims. When disputes do arise, Islam enjoins forgiveness and reconciliation through *mushawarah*, which can be translated as engaging in dialogue and peaceful negotiations. Furthermore, the teachings of Islam put a very high premium on peace and development. Islam is definitely not an encumbrance to progress and prosperity. In my country Malaysia, although Muslims constitute the large majority of the population, the government has used the progressive teachings of Islam as the basis for good governance to deliver benefits to all sectors of our multi-ethnic and multi-religious society without discrimination. We call this approach *Islam Hadhari*.

Mr. President,

20. I have highlighted two global challenges that we now face in our time. I remain optimistic, however, that universal human fraternity and coexistence is attainable if and when the critical political and strategic issues are resolved in tandem with the closing of the gap of misunderstandings between cultures and civilizations.

21. This effort requires our collective wisdom and courage to recognize the problems. The wellbeing of the planet earth and all the people who inhabit the earth are actually within our control. We must have the will to moderate our excesses and cater for the needs of future generations, using science and technology as our tools. I would therefore like to end where I began, with a plea, that the time for us to invest in our collective future is here and now.

Thank you.