

# **Remarks at Institute for Diplomacy and Foreign Relations: "The United Nations and Malaysia in a Changing World" [as prepared for delivery]**

Selamat pagi [good morning]

I am pleased to be here in the house of your first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, Bapa Kemerdekaan [Father of Independence], Bapa Malaysia [Father of Malaysia],

I hope you can see my lapel pin.

It says ‘number 1’

My staff wondered what it was when they saw it.

After all, they already know I am number one!

So I explained that it stands for “satu Malaysia” – “one Malaysia”.

This is such a fundamental, important concept.

Yours is a diverse, multi-ethnic, multi-religious nation.

You have six languages and six major religions.

But you are pulling together in common cause.

Everyone celebrates everyone else’s religious festivals.

This habit of living harmoniously – of having a sound social compact -- surely underpins Malaysia’s success.

This is a core value of the United Nations, too.

That is why we work so hard to promote and defend the social compact – and to repair it in places where it has broken down.

Places such as Syria.

One year ago, people in Syria began to call for change -- for freedom and dignity.

Instead of reform, they were met with brutal repression.

Now, instead of a peaceful transition, the country faces the spectre of sectarian strife.

The Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr Kofi Annan, is working hard to prevent this, and to help Syrians find a path towards a peaceful, pluralist, democratic society.

In this context, we very much welcome the adoption yesterday by the Security Council of a Presidential statement supporting Mr. Annan's mission.

In clear and unmistakable terms, the Security Council called for an immediate end to all violence and human rights violations. . It demanded secure humanitarian access and a comprehensive political dialogue between the government and the whole spectrum of the Syrian opposition.

As the situation on the ground continues to deteriorate, it is more urgent than ever to find a solution. I hope that this strong and united action by the Council will mark a turning point in the international community's response to the crisis.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Civil strife of the sort we are seeing in Syria can destroy whole societies.

Pitting communities, ethnic and religious groups against each other can be dangerous in the extreme.

Yet too often, such divisions are manipulated for political narrow purposes -- not only in Syria but in many corners of our world.

Even the most stable democracies suffer horrific acts fuelled by extremism and bigotry.

The United Nations is dedicated to countering these forces of hatred.

We speak out against intolerance. We stand for justice, dignity and mutual understanding.

I know Malaysia shares these principles.

So, I commend your emphasis on "One Malaysia", "satu Malaysia".

Malaysia is also making significant efforts to smooth tensions between Muslim majority countries and the West through your Global Movement of Moderates.

As the movement gains momentum, I encourage you to reach out and engage the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations.

Your objectives intersect significantly with the Alliance's objectives.

We can be good partners in the struggle against extremism and intolerance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Malaysia and the United Nations are close in many others ways as well.

You are a friend to the United Nations. You support our principles and contribute to our work.

Your peacekeepers have participated in some 25 UN peacekeeping operations in more than 20 countries.

I would like to talk with you today about how Malaysia can contribute even more.

Malaysia has an important role to play in advancing the Action Agenda I have set out for the next five years.

I have identified five imperatives... five generational opportunities to deliver results for the world's people.

Sustainable development.

Preventing conflicts and disasters, human rights abuses and development setbacks.

Building a safer and more secure world, including by standing strong on fundamental principles of democracy and human rights.

Supporting nations in transition.

Working for women and young people.

All have resonance here in Malaysia and in the region.

Last November's Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between the United Nations and ASEAN, introduces new avenues of cooperation to address these imperatives.

First, sustainable development.

Malaysia has made great strides in reducing poverty.

You are a model in achieving the Millennium Development Goals ahead of the target date.

Your experiences can help countries throughout the global South, and I urge Malaysia to look at how it can increase South-South cooperation.

Europe and the United States may be struggling, but in East and South Asia, in Latin America, even in Africa, many economies are growing.

Millions of people have been lifted from poverty.

With such success comes responsibility.

This is your chance to assume leadership.

We are less than 100 days from the UN Conference on Sustainable Development.

Rio+20 is our opportunity to put the world on a more sustainable path: economically, socially, and environmentally.

To eradicate poverty and reduce inequality.

To make growth inclusive while combating climate change and respecting planetary boundaries.

Your country is rich in natural resources that are important not just to your own sustainable development but to the world.

You face urgent sustainable development challenges at home, from protecting the forests of Sarawak and Sabah to ensuring smart growth in Kuala Lumpur.

Raising standards of living for this generation has little value if the price must be paid by the next.

At Rio+20 let us define a new set of sustainable development goals.

Malaysia's engagement in the Rio+20 process is crucial.

Ladies and gentlemen,

My second priority is prevention.

It is well known that prevention is better – and cheaper – than cure.

We see that clearly with disasters.

Two of the strongest earthquakes of modern history have struck the Asia-Pacific region in the past eight years.

After the 2004 tsunami, and again since the disaster at the Fukushima nuclear plant, we are strengthening early warning, preparedness and resilience.

Just days from now I will attend the Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul, which will focus on nuclear terrorism and the risk of environmental contamination from disasters.

My prevention agenda also highlights early action on conflict such as by mapping, linking, collecting and integrating information from across the international system.

It also emphasizes supporting national dialogue, mediation and rapid response.

We will also adopt a preventive approach to human rights and support efforts to extend the reach of the International Criminal Court.

The past year has seen major advances in upholding the emerging doctrine of the responsibility to protect. But we must do even more.

I am pleased that the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific has produced a consensus report on the responsibility to protect.

Such consensus can help prevent the kind of atrocities we saw more than three decades ago in Cambodia.

The killing fields took four to five times as many lives as the two recent tsunamis combined.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This brings me to my third imperative: building a safer and more secure world, including by standing strong on fundamental principles of democracy and human rights.

The region's success cannot be cause for complacency.

Malaysia and its neighbours face common challenges related to human rights.

These include protecting the rights of migrants – particularly undocumented migrants.

I commend the Government for the goodwill that they have shown towards refugees from the region and beyond for many years.

It would be timely to build on this goodwill by ratifying the UN Refugee Convention and its Optional Protocol.

Other human rights issues include tackling human trafficking; ensuring freedom of expression and religion; and combating discrimination against people with disabilities.

I welcome the historic establishment in Malaysia of the bipartisan Parliamentary Select Committee on electoral reform.

I hope the final report and recommendations of the Committee will take into account all legitimate concerns expressed by relevant stakeholders.

I sincerely hope the electoral reform process will lead to a truly transparent and credible system, to the satisfaction of all Malaysians.

The United Nations stands ready to assist the Government and people of Malaysia in this endeavour.

I also welcome the repeal of Malaysia's Internal Security Act.

I hope the Government will ensure that the replacement laws will be in full compliance with international human rights standards.

And I encourage the Government, as a Member of the UN Human Rights Council, to sign all the core UN human rights conventions.

I also urge the early drafting and implementation of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration.

I place great importance on the development of an effective ASEAN human rights system.

Regional mechanisms of this kind in other parts of the world have helped to complement national and international human rights mechanisms.

They have closed gaps in protection and helped to foster a regional human rights culture.

The United Nations will continue to support ASEAN in this endeavour.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The fourth item on the action agenda is supporting nations in transition.

These countries are home to one and a half billion people.

All are off-track to meet the MDGs.

All would benefit from Malaysia's experience and expertise to help promote development and consolidate freedoms and opportunity.

I commend Malaysia's pledge of \$1 million to the Organization of the Islamic Conference Trust Fund on Somalia that you announced at last year's General Assembly general debate.

That expression of solidarity comes at a crucial time for that country.

Now is the time to scale up our efforts for all countries in transition, especially in areas where the UN's unique services are in demand -- peacebuilding... rule of law... electoral assistance... dispute resolution... anti-corruption... constitution-making and power-sharing arrangements... and democratic practices.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Across my action agenda, one essential element stands out: the need to empower women and young people.

In too many countries, in too many communities, in too many households, women remain second-class citizens.

We will deepen the UN campaign to end violence and enhance support for countries to adopt legislation that criminalizes violence against women.

We will do even more to promote women's political participation worldwide, including in peacebuilding.

We will encourage countries to adopt measures that guarantee women's equal access to political leadership... that promote women's engagement in elections... and that build the capacity of women to be effective leaders.

And we will develop a programme for ensuring the full participation of women in social and economic recovery, so it does not pass them by.

For young people, we will develop an action plan across the full range of UN programmes, including employment... entrepreneurship... political participation... human rights... education and reproductive health.

Today we have the largest generation of young people the world has ever known.

We will do all we can to meet their needs for a greater voice in economic and political life.

I will count on Malaysia to show leadership in all these areas.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Malaysia has much to contribute in each area of our work.

Your diverse, multi-ethnic, multi-religious society has developed into a stable middle income nation.

You have weathered financial shocks, including the great economic crisis of the late 1990s, and you continue to enjoy high economic growth.

These are tremendous foundations to build on.

In today's rapidly changing world, the United Nations will continue to depend on Malaysia, for sustainable development... preventing conflicts and disasters... building a safer and more secure world... supporting nations in transition... and working for women and young people.

Terima kasih [Thank you]

Thank you.