

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



Speech by

His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom,
President of the Republic of Maldives,

on behalf of the Asian member countries of the Commonwealth,

at the Final Session of the Commonwealth

Heads of Government Meeting in MaltaValletta,

Sunday, 27 November 2005

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Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary General, Distinguished Delegates;

It is an honor for me and the Maldives to speak on behalf of the Asian region. Therefore, on behalf of the member states of the Asian region, I would like, first of all, to congratulate you Mr. Chairman, on the resounding success of this Summit, and for the manner in which you have very wisely and skillfully steered our deliberations.

Mr. Chairman,

Diversity is a very important characteristic of the Commonwealth, and indeed is a source of our strength. It also means that we bring along a very wider array of interests and concerns, and during the course of the past three days, we have covered a variety of issues of fundamental interest to all of us.

The current President of the EU, Mr. Tony Blair, in my view, deserves a special mention for his very important contribution to this Summit.

With the Hong Kong Ministerial Meeting of the WTO looming ahead of us, naturally, trade issues had dominated our discussions. We've been able to reach a very promising and forward-looking Declaration on the subject.

All the countries in the Asian region are developing countries, and we have much to look forward to in terms of the follow up to what we have agreed here in Malta. For the Maldives, as a small island state, the CHOGM has again proved to be eminently helpful and useful, and has again demonstrated the value in networking for development, peace and progress. Indeed the special feature of the CHOGM - networking for development – is of great benefit to small states and to all members of the Commonwealth.

Meeting here in Malta, I find a number of similarities between our two countries, and there is a lot we can learn from the successes achieved by the people of Malta. In fact, last night I was introducing myself to an invitee at the President's dinner, by saying that I am from the Maldives and he said, 'oh, then you are a home-grown politician'.

Mr. Chairman,

May I also add that the format of the present CHOGM has enabled us to focus on a broad spectrum of concerns. Our review of global developments has covered three of the most important issues of our time - the promotion of democracy and human rights, the suppression of terrorism and the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals.

In addition, the focus given to small states again shows how valuable this forum is for small island states, particularly in a rapidly globalising world. Our vulnerability - both economically and environmentally - does find strong empathy and sympathy within the Commonwealth.

Let me also thank you Mr. Chairman, and your Government and people, for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to all of us since our arrival in this historic and beautiful country, and also express our appreciation for the excellent arrangements made for the Meeting.

It was a great pleasure and privilege to have met His Excellency Dr. Eddie Fenech-Adami, President of Malta, who has a long-standing association with the Commonwealth, and with whom I have had the pleasure of meeting in many earlier CHOGMs. In fact I hope my friend, President Museveni won't mind if I say that I am also like him, a senior 'CHOGMist', having attended so many CHOGMs since 1982 that I have now lost count of them.

I would also like to express our gratitude for the Secretary General and his tireless staff for the excellent manner in which they have supported our efforts here, and indeed have advanced the course of the Commonwealth between Summits as well.

Let me conclude by expressing our profound thanks to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Head of the Commonwealth, for the personal interest that Her Majesty takes in the welfare and success of our Association.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.