

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



**Speech by  
His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom,  
President of the Republic of Maldives,  
at the  
Fourteenth Summit Conference  
of the Heads of State or Government  
of the Non-Aligned Movement**

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

*Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

Today, I feel a very special pride as I address you. If I am not mistaken, I happen to be the only Head of State or Government who is here today and who had taken part in the Sixth NAM Summit, that was held here, in this very Hall, twenty-seven years ago.

The late Palestinian leader, Chairman Yasser Arafat and I arrived in Havana in 1979 on a memorable flight from Tripoli, after attending the Tenth Anniversary of the Great September Revolution. Chairman Arafat is

no longer with us. May Allah shower His bounteous blessings on his soul, and reward him abundantly, for the valuable services he had rendered to his people, and to our movement for over forty years.

Returning to Cuba after so many years, I am again touched by the warm reception and the excellent hospitality accorded to us by the Government of Cuba.

I would like to join previous speakers in expressing our gratitude to the Government and the people of this beautiful country. I would also like to convey our good wishes for the speedy recovery of President Fidel Castro.

As on the occasion of my last visit here, I would like to compliment President Castro for his wise and visionary leadership, that has brought tremendous progress and development to the people of Cuba, and inspired NAM to attain greater heights.

May I also congratulate President Castro, as he takes on the onerous duties of guiding the work of NAM for the next three years. His vast experience as an elder statesman, and as a champion of the principles of non-alignment would, no doubt, make an immense contribution to the success of our endeavours.

I would also like to commend the outgoing Chairman, Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi of Malaysia, for the momentum he had imparted to the Movement during his tenure.

Indeed, the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Continuing the Revitalization of NAM needs to be diligently followed up, because it will

pave the way for our Movement to accelerate its progress in the quest for a better world; whose currency is neither power nor force, but justice and fairness.

I extend a very warm welcome to the delegations of Haiti and St Kitts and Nevis, who join us for the first time.

*Mr. Chairman:*

Twenty-seven years ago, here in Havana, at the Sixth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, I voiced the aspirations of my people for a world that was just, equitable and stable.

Since then, in some ways the world has changed drastically.

We have banished apartheid; we have buried colonialism; and we have triumphed over the perils of great power rivalry.

But in many other ways, the world is much the same.

When we last met at Havana, we were disillusioned by the failure of the North-South Dialogue to give an equitable deal to the developing countries. We were concerned by the apparent disregard shown by some states for the principles of the UN Charter. We were alarmed by the fact that our prospects for economic development were clouded by deepening poverty and insufficient assistance. Our economies were suffering from the energy crisis and declining terms of trade.

*Mr. Chairman:*

Though times may have changed, they have not changed enough.

There was no peace dividend that followed the end of the Cold War. Genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda, endless civil war and anarchy in Somalia and Afghanistan, the plight of the Palestinians, the fate of Iraq, the devastation of Lebanon by Israel, the rise of terrorism and hatred, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, have made the world equally, if not more, perilous than what it was when we met here in 1979.

Well may we say that the fear of a nuclear winter has receded; but it has been replaced by the rising threat of a lifeless summer of global warming. Now, as then, the very survival of the human race is at stake.

These challenges make it imperative that the Non-Aligned Movement continues to revitalize its political platform, in order to become an international instrument of change for the better.

*Mr. Chairman:*

The current global strategic, economic, political and environmental situation poses many difficult problems to our countries collectively and individually.

We have grown in number, but not in strength, for the latter lies in the extent to which the principles of the UN Charter, and of the Non-Aligned Movement, and of the equality of nations and the rule of law, are being upheld.

We hope that we do not have to learn the lessons of the past century, all over again.

Fear cannot be overcome by fear, and war cannot ever banish war.

What we now call “the global village” is threatened by segregation between affluent suburbs and derelict ghettos. It is also being fractured by mindsets of intolerance and fear.

If we cannot find unity in diversity, we cannot attain solidarity for a common vision. And without a common vision, we cannot overcome the global challenges of poverty, disease, environmental degradation, human rights abuse and terrorism.

These challenges clearly make it essential that we reassert the ideals, values and principles of the Non-Aligned Movement, which evoke the spirit of Bandung. We must strengthen co-ordination with the Group of 77, and formulate a common platform on development-related issues.

At the same time, we should promote constructive dialogue with our development partners to foster greater North-South collaboration. Our solidarity should be directed at implementing the Monterrey Consensus, and agreements of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

*Mr. Chairman:*

Being a low-lying small island state, environmental degradation has been a major concern for the Maldives. Climate change and sea level rise pose an imminent danger for my people. We were the first to sign the Kyoto Protocol. We were also among the first to ratify it. However, the lack of progress in implementing the Protocol is ample evidence of the urgent need to strengthen multilateralism.

Over the years, we have also been at the forefront of promoting the need for special consideration to be given to small island developing states. The international community has an obligation to ensure our security. I firmly believe that NAM is an ideal platform to lead the fight against environmental degradation, and the vulnerability of small island states.

My country, the Maldives, suffered unprecedented destruction from the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004. Over a hundred people lost their lives. Thousands were rendered homeless. 62% of the GDP was destroyed within a matter of minutes.

I thank many of our friends in NAM and elsewhere who have come to our assistance. But, twenty-one months on, we continue to need a lot of help in sustaining our recovery programme. We seek further international support and assistance to complement our own efforts.

*Mr. Chairman:*

The political function of NAM must also be affirmed without fear or favour. Every effort must be made to strengthen the United Nations in order to enhance multilateralism, maintain international peace and security, promote human rights, attain social and economic progress, protect the environment, and increase respect for international law.

*Mr. Chairman:*

We must never part from the courage of our convictions and the moral authority of our principles.

Principle must prevail over power. Where there is no rule of law, there is no order. Where there is no order, there is no justice, and no peace. Where there is no peace, there is no life.

The task ahead of us is, therefore, very clear – to galvanize global action to safeguard life itself.

What can be more important than that?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.