



Malaysia

Permanent Mission to the United Nations

**STATEMENT BY
THE HONOURABLE ANIFAH AMAN,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF MALAYSIA**

**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 67TH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**29 SEPTEMBER 2012
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Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you Mr. President, on your election as the President of the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am confident that you will be able to successfully steer the proceedings of the 67th session in an efficient and effective manner. I assure you of Malaysia's full cooperation and support throughout your Presidency. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the previous President, HE Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, for his leadership and guidance throughout the 66th session.

Mr. President,

2. The release of the distasteful and insulting film "Innocence of Muslims" had caused widespread wave of protests across the Muslim world. The problem is compounded by the publication of offensive caricatures, which further angered Muslims. It is hard to understand why those responsible could resort to such actions knowing that it would offend and provoke 2 billion Muslims except for blatant malicious intent and purpose. It is our obligation as peace loving people and responsible governments to prevent a small minority of bigots to sow the seed of hatred between the Muslim world and the West.

3. These people are what we categorize as 'extremists'. They insult Islam and advocate religious hatred. These extremists have shown absolutely no regard on the implications of their actions. While we condemn the irresponsible actions of those who intentionally incite hatred, we are equally saddened by the violent reactions that ensued.

Expressing anger by resorting to violence, killings and destruction does not offer any solution to the problem and only results in further divides and possibly more damage and loss of innocent lives.

4. We condemn those responsible for the death of Ambassador Christopher Stevens and his colleagues in Benghazi. We are equally saddened by the loss of innocent lives, including women and children during emotionally-charged demonstrations. A life lost is one too many. Those who made the film and drew the caricatures, as well as those who resorted to killing are equally guilty of extremism and must be held accountable and brought to justice.

Mr. President,

5. I believe that it is time to dwell deeper into the heart of the problem and the real debate - the relationship between freedom of expression and social responsibilities, duties and obligations. Such actions cannot be defended under the pretext of human rights, freedoms and liberties. A line should be drawn when the prejudicial effect outweighs everything else. Malaysia has always maintained that freedom including freedom of expression comes with responsibility. The drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I am sure, did not have denigration in mind when they cited the need to promote and protect freedom of expression.

6. Human rights need to be guaranteed by taking into account the cultural and historical sensitivities of a society. Nevertheless, it should also be applied without selectivity or discrimination. **When we discriminate against gender, it is called sexism; when African Americans are criticized and vilified, it is called racism; when the same is done to the Jews, people call it Anti-Semitism; but why is it when Muslims are stigmatized and defamed, it is defended as 'freedom of expression'?**

Mr. President,

7. In his statement during the International Day of Peace, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon rightly said and I quote "*We must not let the voices of extremists dominate the debate and inflame tensions. We need voices of moderation and solidarity*" unquote. The Prime Minister of Malaysia two years ago in this august assembly advocated the Global Movement of Moderates and called for all peoples of the world to join the chorus of moderates so as to drown the voices of extremists.

8. Embracing 'moderation' is an important value that should be ingrained in every society. Moderation comes with a high degree of tolerance, trust and mutual understanding. It places dialogue as an important tool to resolve disputes. With relative political peace comes economic stability and socio-economic development in the country. It is therefore important that we continue to practice moderation as we face the rising tide of extremism. Moderation is the best response to overcome extremism.

Mr. President,

9. The first International Conference of the Global Movement of Moderates held in Kuala Lumpur in January this year was well attended by over 500 participants from all over the world. It affirmed the importance in moderation in the context of its application to global issues and situations, especially to matters that relates to social, financial, religious and international politics. Global Movement of Moderates has gained the recognition and support of the Commonwealth, Non Aligned Movement and ASEAN. We believe that GMM provides an effective platform for global response to extremism.

Mr. President,

10. The theme of this year's General Assembly, ***"Bringing about Adjustment or Settlement of International Disputes or Situations by Peaceful Means"*** is timely as it reiterates the core principles and values of the UN in facing continuing conflicts and situations around the world.

11. We continue to have serious concerns regarding the situation in Syria. We condemn the violence and senseless killing that have and continue to take place. As we contemplate the next step forward, we have to bear in mind that whatever measures we take must be in the interest of the Syrian people. It is not about who is wrong or right, it is about putting an end to the bloodshed and suffering, bringing peaceful and inclusive resolution to the conflict.

12. The unabated violence and killings must stop immediately. The parties involved have equal responsibility of ensuring the end to these appalling atrocities. Military aggression and armed confrontation will only served to exacerbate the problem and can never be a solution to the crisis except diminishing any little hope there is for peaceful settlement. We earnestly hope that with the appointment of Lakhdar Brahimi as the new Joint Special Envoy for Syria, a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis would be found. Toward this end the support of all parties including the involvement of the United Nations is crucial.

Mr. President,

13. The situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory remains bleak. For more than six decades, day after day, month after month, the people of Palestine continue to see their lands confiscated to make way for illegal settlements. They continue to see their families, including their children, displaced and forced from their homes. Elsewhere we are quick in calling for action against those that deemed to live under oppression and that are forced to live without freedom and dignity. But, we are unashamed in not taking strong and decisive actions in ensuring the long deprived Palestinians their rights to their homeland and regaining their dignity within the community of nations. Surely the international community especially the more powerful and influential nations could do more to bring Israel to the negotiating table for a Two States Solution whereby the state of Israel and the state of Palestine could exist side by side in peace and security. How can we continue to live in the face of this glaring

injustice without feeling an iota of guilt for not doing enough to bring to end this long outstanding issue?

Mr. President,

14. As with others in this hall, Malaysia welcomes the convening of the inaugural High Level Meeting on the Rule of Law earlier this week. In that Meeting, we adopted a solemn declaration that the rule of law shall apply to all States equally. We rededicated ourselves to resolve disputes by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law. We also committed ourselves to uphold the right to self-determination of peoples, which remain under foreign occupation and to end impunity for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. With this declaration, it is time for the international community to put pressure on Israel to fulfill its international obligations.

15. At the same time, Israel must stop all illegal settlement activities in the West Bank as well as East Jerusalem. We are particularly concerned by the threats to invade or divide the site of Al-Aqsa Mosque, which would be a breach of Israel's obligations as an Occupying Power. It is a holy site for Muslims and Christians as well. Furthermore, Israel must lift the illegal blockade over Gaza that has caused too much hardship for the people. It must also protect the people under its occupation, fulfill its international obligations and respect international law. Most importantly, it ought to have direct talks with the Palestinian Authority in conditions that clearly demonstrate its goodwill and sincerity. A peaceful two-State solution, accompanied by sustainable peace in the region, should be the ultimate goal for all concerned.

Mr. President,

16. Recognizing Palestine and welcoming it into the community of nations has become a contentious issue. Palestine is punished for wanting to become a rightful member of the United Nations. The feasibility of a two-state solution is being questioned. However, what choice does Palestine have? Furthermore, how would becoming a member of the UN harm Palestine's sincere efforts for independence?

17. The issue of Palestine's membership to the UN is tied to another bigger issue that is of particular concern to Malaysia. Allow me to elaborate. 132 countries recognise the State of Palestine. That number reflects more than two thirds of the membership of the UN. Yet, the Security Council, or more accurately, those who are conferred with veto power, are given the authority to determine the fate of Palestine membership irrespective of the opinions of the majority.

Mr. President,

18. This is just one of a host of reasons on why the United Nations, especially the Security Council, needs to be reformed. The Security Council will need to be able to cope with the many challenges that the international community face. There are so

many instances when it has failed to take action when action is needed the most. It has failed to do this due to the veto power conferred to the five permanent members. Thus, time and time again it has become a victim of its own creation.

19. The composition of the Security Council should also reflect current global realities. It should be democratic and accountable in order for it to be able to fulfil its mandate in maintaining international peace and security effectively. It is ironic that the very institution that was formed in 1945 which seeks to promote and defend democracy among its Member States is in itself undemocratic.

20. Virtually every aspect of reform has been argued in one way or another. There have been so many proposals on the table. None have made any headway. Therefore, despite the many years the issue of Security Council reform has been on the UN agenda, we are nowhere closer to actual reform than when we first started.

21. We call on all Member States to be realistic and find workable solutions to reforms. There is a need to approach reform with renewed political will if we genuinely want to see progress made to achieve a more efficient and effective UN. How long can we go on like this? How long can we avoid the need to reform the Security Council as well as the United Nations as a whole?

Mr. President,

22. It would be remiss of me not to mention on what many consider as the most important meeting to take place this year, which is the Rio+20 Summit held in Brazil in June. While the Summit is over, much work remains. The mandated actions in the Summit's outcome document need our close follow up, monitoring and participation in order to successfully set them in motion. The strengthening of sustainable development and environmental institutions, as well as, the finance strategy and mechanisms for facilitating the transfer of technology, are some of the important areas that we would need to act upon in the year ahead.

23. Accordingly, we need to launch a process to decide the sustainable development goals. The goals should be supported by concrete action plans, with details on the various areas mentioned in order to implement those plans. On this, Malaysia looks forward to working constructively and contributing to this process.

Mr. President,

24. I believe that we share similar concerns on all the issues I have raised today. Bringing about adjustment and settlement of disputes and situations is not only a concern of the parties involved in a dispute or situation, but it is a joint collective responsibility of the international community. In line with this year's theme, we assure you of our commitment to ensure lasting global peace and security through peaceful means by embracing the principles of moderation.

I thank you.