

KEYNOTE SPEECH I

Mahathir Mohamad

Former Prime Minister, Malaysia

Thank you very much for the introduction. Firstly, I would like to say thank you to the host, to the joint hosts, for this invitation to participate in the Jeju Forum. I am particularly attracted to this session because we are going to discuss about the role of Asia and also the “New Waves in Asia.” Asia is going to be influential in many areas of human endeavor, but I would like to focus only on one area, and that is, war. About Asia’s attitude toward war.

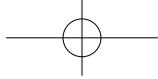
Currently, there are tensions in this part of the world, because of claims and counter-claims on some tiny pieces of land. There is a possibility of confrontation, and also a possibility of war, because no country would like to have even one square inch of his land occupied by people they consider their counter-claimers. And because of that, countries may go to war. But war is a terrible thing. War is about killing people. And to think that in our modern civilization, we still try to solve problems by killing people, to think about that makes me conclude that we are still rather primitive people.

In Malaysia today, we have launched a campaign worldwide to make war a crime. Now, many will say that this is impossible. From time immemorial, we have been fighting wars. How can we make war a crime? Even today, we see wars being fought: wars against territories, wars to achieve regime change, and a possibility of wars within the nations in East Asia. So we still believe that we should kill people in order to achieve our objective.

But today’s wars are different from the wars of the past. With bows and arrows, you can kill very few people, and normally you will kill the soldiers who are fighting on the other side. But today’s wars are total wars: the whole country would be involved. Not only will the soldiers be killed, but civilians will be killed. Noncombatants will be killed. Men, women, children, the old, the sick, the poor, the handicapped – all of them would be collaterals; they would all get killed.

We have made great advances in the weapons for killing people. We are now very efficient; we have come to the stage where we can direct unmanned aircraft in order to kill people. We also know that we have within us, all the nations of the world, more than 30,000 nuclear warheads. And if you launch the 30,000 nuclear warheads, the whole human race will be wiped out.

| New Waves in Asia |



Of course, we think that we will never do that. But you know, just as there was this madman who burned the gate in Seoul, maybe there will be a madman who presses the button and starts a nuclear war, and of course the countries which have been attacked will have to reply in kind, and we will have a nuclear war, and the whole of this human race would be wiped out.

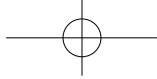
War is really a very primitive way of settling disputes between nations. We should resort to other means. We should make war a crime.

Malaysia had disputes with all her neighbors. We had a dispute with Thailand, with Indonesia, with the Philippines, and also with other countries. We settled the counter-claims and claims and overlapping claims with Thailand by negotiating. We decided that the sea which was claimed by them and by us, the exploitation of the resources from the sea, should be shared 50/50 between our two countries. And that ends the confrontation between us.

With Indonesia, there were claims, overlapping claims, on two islands, beautiful islands, Ligitan and Sipadan. We tried to negotiate for years and years, and we failed, and finally both countries decided that we should go to the world court and ask the world court to decide, and we committed ourselves to accept whatever decision was made by the world court. And the world court decided that the two islands belong to Malaysia. Of course, Indonesia is not happy, but when you go to courts, sometimes you win, and sometimes you lose.

Then, there is a tiny rock in the seas between Singapore and Malaysia, just a tiny rock on which there is a lighthouse. Malaysia claims the tiny rock as ours, Singapore as theirs; again, we decided to negotiate, but again we failed, and we decided to go to the world court. And the world court decided that, wrongly of course, the rock belongs to Singapore. So we have to accept that.

So that ends the conflict within us. We didn't have to go to war, and no one died, but just imagine, just because there is an island somewhere in the sea, and both countries claim, you are prepared to go to war. And even if you don't go to war, the preparations for war, for defense, for attacks, would cost billions and billions and trillions of dollars. And what



happens? There will be tension.

Hopefully, there will not be any war, but the tension and the preparation for the war would already cost the countries concerned, huge sums of money. And this is not something that contributes to the well-being of people.

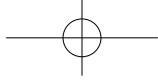
I think that we should rather spend that money on welfare, on looking after the poor, on better health services and educational services, for our own country and for other countries. That is the wise way to spend money. But to spend trillions of dollars preparing for war, developing new weapons, and all kinds of weapons of mass destruction that have been invented—it is a waste, a waste of human resources, which we in this century, in this year 2013, should not be doing. We should not be wasting resources that way; we should think instead of negotiation, or of arbitration, of going to the courts to settle disputes between nations.

And if we want to stop war, we will have to make war a crime—a crime against humanity. Of course, there would be people who would have to defend themselves. People who defend themselves are doing something legitimate. But people who resort to war in order to solve their problems with other nations should be regarded as having committed a crime. And the whole world should turn against that nation, and ensure that the leaders of such nations be brought to the courts of the world and be tried in the same way that other criminals are tried.

It is something that is regarded as impossible now. But please remember that at one time, slavery was accepted by the whole world. We all had slaves, and it was normal to have slaves. But today, nobody has slaves because it is illegal. It is immoral to have slaves. And so in all the countries of the world, slaves have been banned. It took a long time to stop slavery, to stop slave trade, but it was a success. And today we are free of slavery.

Perhaps, if we begin now at this Jeju conference, if we begin to work towards making war a crime, we may one day resolve all our conflicts through negotiation, through arbitration, or through resorting to the courts of law.

I hope that we all give some time to think about this, making war a crime, so that we will



not waste the lives of our young, so that we will not kill so many people, but instead, we should be very wealthy—because the money that today is being spent on weapons would be spent on the welfare of humanity.

I thank you.