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SPEECH BY MR YEO CHEOW TONG, MINISTER OF STATE
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND HEALTH, AT THE MINISTERIAL
CONFERENCE OF THE NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES AT LUANDA
ON SATURDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 1985

May I congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this conference. I am confident that under your wise and able guidance this conference will be a success.

May I also on behalf of the Singapore delegation extend our appreciation to the Government and people of Angola for their warm and cordial hospitality. Although Angola and Singapore are geographically far apart, we are present here today through our common membership of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). I hope that by the time this conference is over, we would have found even more common ground which can contribute to the strengthening of bilateral ties between our two countries.

Our meeting in Luanda demonstrates the support of the Non-Aligned Movement for the peoples of Africa. Among the most significant issues to be faced by this meeting are the response of the movement to the growing repression of the apartheid regime in South Africa, the unilateral imposition of an illegal "interim administration" in Namibia by the South African Government, and the attacks on neighbouring African states by South Africa.

The imposition of a state of emergency and other repressive measures by the South African government and the growing isolation of the Pretoria regime will heighten

conflict in South Africa. The struggle against apartheid has broken new ground. International condemnation of apartheid is assuming more concrete forms. The Non-Aligned Movement will need to press on to help the people of South Africa dismantle the racist doctrines and practices which deny them their birthright.

The Namibian question is stalemated by the intransigence of South Africa which continues its illegal occupation of Namibia in defiance of all UN resolutions. South Africa has tried to perpetuate the status quo by setting up an "interim administration" in Namibia. Renewed efforts should be made to counter South African manoeuvring and bring about a solution within the framework of UN resolutions, in particular, Security Council Resolution 435.

On the economic front, parts of the African continent are experiencing a serious crisis. In some 20 African countries, widespread and prolonged drought together with accelerated desertification have combined to threaten the very survival of the millions of Africans living in these countries. It is imperative that the continent and the international community give urgent attention to the task of meeting this crisis.

Mr Chairman, the challenges facing the non-aligned world have changed. The Non-Aligned Movement spearheaded the struggle for the emancipation of the peoples of Asia, Africa and other parts of the world. Although the process of decolonization is almost complete, many Third World countries still remain politically and economically vulnerable to external pressures. The aspirations of their peoples to achieve economic growth with social justice have yet to be met.

For some time, the movement has grappled with the problem of handling issues confronting its members. We have found it easiest to condemn the manoeuvres of the old-style imperialists and colonialists. We have found it harder to respond to new forms of colonial domination. Even worse, we have found it hardest to criticise those amongst our members who don the mantle of new colonialists and invade neighbouring territories, in blatant disregard for the principles of non-interference and non-intervention, respect for territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

In South-East Asia, Cambodia, a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, has fallen victim to foreign invasion and occupation. For the past six years, ASEAN and the international community have tried to persuade Vietnam to withdraw from Cambodia and reach a negotiated settlement. Each year since 1979, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted with overwhelming majorities, resolutions calling upon Vietnam to withdraw its forces from Cambodia. We are pleased to note that an overwhelming number of Non-Aligned states have supported these resolutions. Unfortunately, Vietnam has not abided by these UN resolutions.

Mr Chairman, we feel that any attempt to deny the legitimacy of the UN resolutions on Cambodia is tantamount to a denial of the validity of all UN resolutions. Fortunately, this movement has declared its overwhelming commitment to the United Nations Charter and its principles and has strongly reaffirmed the need to implement all UN resolutions. We therefore call upon Vietnam to join the movement in reaffirming its commitment to the United Nations Charter. We welcome the discussions taking place between states in the South-East Asian region. However, Vietnam must remain accountable to the international community for its continuing occupation of Cambodia.

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Mr Chairman, the Non-Aligned Movement is still contending with the injustice perpetuated in Havana in 1979 to deny Democratic Kampuchea its legitimate seat. The movement must find a way to restore justice.

After six years, armed resistance by the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea against Vietnamese occupation has grown significantly. At the same time, the complexion of the problem has changed from invasion and foreign occupation to one of colonization. Vietnam has embarked on a systematic domination of Cambodia through the social-economic integration of Cambodia into Vietnam and the massive transfers of Vietnamese settlers into Cambodia. This process of Vietnamese colonization of Cambodia must not pass unnoticed in the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr Chairman, the conflicts in Cambodia, Afghanistan and Central America have been exploited by external powers. The aim is to manipulate international opinion, to shift the direction of discussions and influence the agenda and thinking of the international community. Various international fora, including this one, have been the subject of such attempts to influence "the correlation of forces".

This has serious implications for the Non-Aligned Movement. If the movement allows itself to be allied with one superpower against another superpower, our interests as countries will be exploited and dominated by this superpower for its strategic advantage.

There is universal concern about nuclear war. It is a sad commentary that while no Soviet or American soldier has been killed in a direct nuclear conflict involving the two superpowers since the end of World War II, we have witnessed death, bloodshed and suffering through conventional warfare involving superpower proxies in the Third World.

It is therefore essential for us as members of the Non-Aligned Movement to revitalize the distinct interests of the Third World in the international community. We must endeavour to be balanced and consistent in our opposition to any attempt by any superpower to exert its influence on the movement. The idea of non-alignment arose out of our determination to be free of involvement with any power bloc. We must not become a movement which adheres rigidly to one tendency or approach.

As non-aligned countries, we should therefore remain clearly and firmly opposed to the concept that the Non-Aligned Movement should be aligned or allied to any superpower or power bloc. The movement must avoid being entangled in the manoeuvres of both superpowers. We should reject the efforts of both superpowers to impose their wills and to dominate our countries and regions. We are not the strategic reserve of any superpower nor are we the natural ally of any superpower. The non-aligned countries have no alternative in the defence of their independence and sovereignty, but to preserve and strengthen their unity by rejecting all attempts to divert the movement from its principles and objectives.

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