

Right honourable Prime Minister Datu Seri
Dr. Mahathir Mohamad,

It is indeed a privilege for my wife and myself, and the Norwegian delegation to be here tonight at this lovely dinner. I have been very much looking forward to this visit since I received the Prime Minister's kind invitation in May last year, after his official visit to Norway. From our meeting earlier today, and from what I have heard and seen since arriving here, I know that this visit to Malaysia will be highly valuable, interesting and useful to us, and I do hope that it will prove worthwhile to our hosts as well.

Since we arrived we have enjoyed warm hospitality and benefited from the thoughtful preparations for our stay in the federal capital and in Sarawak. For this, and much more, please accept the sincere gratitude of my wife, our delegation and myself.

It is encouraging for us who come from a faraway country with a different history and traditions - and, I may add, such very different natural conditions - to visit Malaysia and find that it stands for so many of the same ideals that the Norwegian people cherish so dearly. Malaysian governments have deservedly earned great international respect for their ability to accept the

will of the voters at the ballot-box and to support and develop democratic principles. It is equally stimulating to see and to hear about the economic and social progress Malaysia has enjoyed in a decade when many other countries have been facing stagnation or even out-right decline in their development.

Mr. Prime Minister, from our conversation in Oslo and here in Kuala Lumpur, we can without fear of exaggeration conclude that our bilateral relations are very good. I feel that there is a high degree of likemindedness in Malaysia and Norway as regards important international political problems, and a prevailing respect for each other's views and sincerity. Our mutual friendship will grow through more frequent contact on the various levels of our societies. What we should aim at is nothing less than friendship that tolerates differing opinions, should they arise. "True gold does not fear fire" according to the old saying.

The economic and commercial sectors seem the most promising as regards the further development of our relations. Our economic cooperation is still far too modest, and there should be ample room for improvement on both sides. You yourself, Mr. Prime Minister, have singled out two fields as particularly interesting, that is trade and investments. Your forceful presentation in Oslo to Norwegian industrialists and import/export representatives has indeed not been without impact. One

of the main tasks of the Norwegian official delegation and of the industrial and business delegation accompanying us is to follow up in earnest the wish you expressed in Oslo to see more Norwegian activity in trade and investment in Malaysia. Once again I can assure you that the Norwegian Government will not fail in its support of Norwegian and Malaysian initiatives in these sectors.

I am happy to note that some cooperation has already been established in several fields, such as shipping, hydropower, offshore oil and gas and telecommunications. In this connection I wish to pay a special tribute to the Malaysian industrial development authority (MIDA) for its encouragement and good advice to Norwegian interests, both in the initial stage of a venture and after they have got underway. We have noted your preference for joint ventures, but also that you are open to other forms of establishment, conditions permitting.

In the fields of both hydropower and offshore activities Norwegian firms have, through experience at home and abroad, and through costly and continuous research over many years, reached a technological level that makes them competitive almost anywhere in the world when it comes to quality and reliability. A field in which we could certainly do better is financing. Some improvements have already been made by the Norwegian Government and Norwegian financial institutions, and we

will look into the matter more closely to see what more can be done to our mutual benefit, I hope. Now more than ever before, Norway is determined to meet the challenge of international competition.

Mr. Prime Minister, you have certainly recognized this imperative in a Malaysian context. Though Norwegian ships have been ploughing the waters around your country for nearly a century, and traditional sectors of Norwegian enterprise have been active in the country on a small scale for several decades, especially after Malaysia won its independence, it is, as a matter of fact, mostly during the past ten years that Norwegian industry and commerce have made significant efforts in Malaysia. As a small country we cannot be everywhere at the same time. But the steadily growing interest in Malaysia in Norway, both generally, and as a market for our goods and services, and as for investments in new enterprises, is encouraging for our bilateral relations. It cannot be denied that we are latecomers, compared so many other foreign countries that are active in Malaysia. It is clearly a challenge to compete with those already established here, but I take heart from the Chinese saying: "The latecomer gets the top".

Let me close by inviting all of you to join me in a toast to the good health of our generous host, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datu Seri Mahathir Mchamad, to the

good health of all our Malaysian colleagues and friends,
and to the continuing development of friendly relations
between Malaysia and Norway.