

**WELCOME ADDRESS TO THE MEETING OF ATTORNEYS
GENERAL
ON A MUTUAL ASSISTANCE IN CRIMINAL MATTERS TREATY
MONDAY 30 JUNE 2003**

BY

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GENERAL OF MALAYSIA**

The Honourable Dato' Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi, Deputy
Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs, Malaysia,

The Honourable Datuk Musa Haji Aman, Chief Minister of Sabah,

Heads of Delegations and the Deputy Secretary-General of the
ASEAN Secretariat,

The Honourable Tan Sri Norian Mai, Inspector General of Police of
Malaysia,

Your Excellencies, the Ambassadors and representatives from
ASEAN Member Countries, Australia, the United Kingdom and the
United States of America,

Honourable Ministers and Members of the Sabah State Government,

Distinguished delegates, observers, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Malaysia and in particular the Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia, it is an honour and a great pleasure for me to welcome all of you to this very important occasion. We are truly privileged to have the presence of the Honourable Dato' Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs, Malaysia to grace this occasion. To the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, we would like to extend our deepest gratitude and appreciation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Meeting is to deliberate a Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Treaty among like-minded ASEAN Member Countries. We look forward to an exchange of ideas and thoughts to create an effective mechanism to establish and enhance mutual assistance in criminal matters among our countries. We are happy to note the strong delegations from each of the participating countries, which reflect the commitment towards a fruitful deliberation.

The idea for this Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Treaty was proposed by Malaysia at the 8th ASEAN Senior Law Officials Meeting (ASLOM) held from 14 to 16 June 2002 and the 5th ASEAN Law Ministers Meeting (ALMM) held from 17 to 18 June 2002 in Bangkok, the Kingdom of Thailand. Malaysia's proposal received heartening support from members of the ASEAN legal fraternity present at the said meetings. The presence of the delegations from the ASEAN Member Countries at this meeting is a testament of the continuous support.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Malaysia's proposal expresses an intention for like-minded ASEAN member Countries to pursue a Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Treaty among themselves as part of the cooperative regional effort to combat transnational crime. As we have been made painfully aware in recent months, the menace of transnational crime, in particular terrorism has taken root in our region and has affected to a certain extent the political and economic climate of these countries.

In bringing our proposal into reality, Malaysia has taken the initiative to prepare a text of a Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Treaty for the further consideration of like-minded ASEAN Member Countries. In preparing this text, Malaysia has been guided by the provisions of the United Nations Model Treaty on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (1990), the Commonwealth Scheme for Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (1986) and the international cooperation regimes provided in various international and regional instruments such as the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (1959) and the Inter-American Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (1992).

The proposed Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Treaty is intended to operate in conjunction with existing mutual assistance in criminal matters mechanisms, both formal and informal. The proposed Treaty does not detract from the existing cooperative mechanisms such as the International Police Organization (INTERPOL).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Malaysia also acknowledges that having treaties such as this alone cannot defeat the criminals. This measure is intended to complement and enhance the action plans and other measures that are being undertaken at national, regional and international levels. This includes the international cooperation mechanisms under the various United Nations Conventions such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Conventions. It also seeks to implement the regional cooperation component of the ASEAN Work Programme to Implement the ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime adopted in Kuala Lumpur on 17 May 2002.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Malaysia sincerely hopes that the Meeting of Attorneys General on a Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Treaty which will be held for the next three days will provide an avenue for the realization of an effective mechanism to address mutual assistance in criminal matters. Malaysia views the deliberation of this instrument as an important and timely contribution to the region's collective action in addressing the scourge of transnational crime. No longer should criminals be allowed to flaunt and take advantage of the differences in our legal systems and penal laws or the lack of an instrument enabling mutual assistance in criminal matters among our countries.

As the host of the Meeting of Attorneys General on a Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Treaty, Malaysia hopes that the meeting will produce the most fruitful of outcomes and that together we will be able to achieve every success in this Meeting towards our fight against transnational crime.

Last but not least, I hope you will enjoy our warmth and hospitality and that you will have an opportunity to visit our beautiful beaches and landmarks, not least Mount Kinabalu, the highest peak in South East Asia.

Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, before I conclude, once again, I would like to express my gratitude to you, for sparing your valuable time to grace this important occasion.

Thank you