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A Perspective on NGOs: Statement by Mr. Mohammad Kamal Yan Yahaya, Deputy Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations, on Agenda Item 100: Globalization and Interdependence

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Ambassador Datuk Hasmy Bin Agam

Datuk Hasmy Bin Agam (Hasmy) is the Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations. He received an M.A. in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University and a B.A. with honors from the University of Malaya.

Before appointment to this position in 1998, Ambassador Agam has held the positions of Alternative Permanent Representative to the UN, Deputy Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Director General of ASEAN-Malaysian, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador to France with concurrent accreditation to Portugal, Ambassador to Libya and concurrently High Commissioner to Malta. Additionally, he was Under-Secretary of the Southeast Asian and Pacific Department and the Southeast Asian and Policy and Planning Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**STATEMENT BY
MR. MOHAMMAD KAMAL YAN YAHAYA
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ON
AGENDA ITEM 100: GLOBALIZATION AND INTERDEPENDENCE**

TUESDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2000

Mr. Chairman,

1. At the outset, my delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by Nigeria on behalf of Group of 77 and China on this agenda item. We, however, like to highlight some specific points, particularly on the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based global economy.

Mr. Chairman,

2. Information and communications technologies (ICT) are rapidly emerging and have become one of the most vital tools for development. Experience has shown that, when used in consistent with local goals for social and economic development, ICT can contribute to the emergence of a truly global knowledge-society - a pre-requisite for sustainable development in the 21st Century.

3. Recognizing that knowledge-based economy can become a powerful and effective tool for development, the Malaysian government has explicitly announced the need for all Malaysians to have a paradigm shift - a fundamental move from the production-driven economy to the knowledge-driven economy. In his recent speech on K-Economy in Kuala Lumpur, our Prime Minister stressed that, "Malaysians must embrace e-commerce and the knowledge economy.... Malaysians must espouse it and make it work for us in the same way that it has worked for others".

4. Towards this end, Malaysia has embarked on an agenda for intensification of knowledge use in all sectors of its economy, new and traditional. We have developed a Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) that brought together, for the first time ever, an integrated environment with all the unique elements and attributes necessary to create the global multimedia climate. Within the MSC project is a uniquely designed Cyberjaya that has been equipped with world-class telecommunications network as well as other facilities to test out ideas and concepts of e-business. Recently, we have built an "entertainment village" that has post-production facilities to cater to the needs of computer animation. This initiative has spawned numerous similar industries around the globe. We then built bridges with these industries and through such collaboration and networking, we hope to create and enhance a global knowledge-based society.

Mr. Chairman,

5. With regard to equal access of information technology to all sectors of society, we fully agree with the report (A/55/75) that the UN should take a lead in providing fair and equal access to ICT among all sectors of society. The emerging and rapidly changing lifestyle and work practices associated with ICT and knowledge societies have indeed posed a greater challenge to women and other marginalized

groups. In this regard, Malaysia's vision is very clear. We are committed to the orderly development of a knowledge society to all segments of our society, regardless of race, religion and gender. In our vision to achieve an informed and computer-literate society we have made every effort to ensure that all segments of our society, men and women, urban and rural, have access to new information technology, particularly computer and internet facilities. Recognizing that women, half of our population, should not only become the bystanders in the information age, appropriate measures have been taken to enable them to play a greater role in the ICT. Recently, at the Second Global Knowledge Conference held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and other members of the Global Knowledge Partnership have developed the Global Knowledge Women's Action Plan.

Mr. Chairman,

7. Malaysia also shares the view stressed by the report on the importance of partnership between the public and private sectors in promoting knowledge-based society. We always believe that effective development requires a careful balancing of the roles of the government and the private sector across a broad range of policies and actions. Through good and difficult times, Malaysia emphasized on a strong public-private partnership. This policy has indeed, enabled us to leap frog to the new level of international competitiveness and participate more actively in the emerging global information economy.

M. Chairman,

8. While there is a prospect of a more rapid growth spurred by the new ICT as evidenced by Malaysia's experience and a few other developing countries, ICT has also created new challenges. We are disheartened to note from the report that only less than 5% of the world's population is engaged in activities related to ICT. The majority (90%) of the Internet host computers are found in rich countries and many countries in Asia and Africa are still grappling with lack of access to telephone lines, not to mention problems from lack of electricity to illiteracy. There is indeed a broad consensus within the international community that the gaps in information and knowledge, both within and between countries are increasing.

9. In order to be at the winning end of the information age, it is imperative that we continue to examine in a more realistic fashion the opportunities, as well as the obstacles for developing countries to benefit fully from the expansion of ICT. We fully share the sentiment echoed by the SG in the ECOSOC on 28 July 2000 that, "we must not let the new information technologies become another resource that divides rich and poor nations. Concrete and efficient actions are needed both at the national and international levels, to spread information technology and its benefits to the developing world so as to ensure that poor countries can join the knowledge-based global economy".

Mr. Chairman,

10. The new millennium will continue to witness rapid advances in information technology. Unfortunately, evidences have shown that only those who have the opportunities, capabilities and access to it will gain. Greater efforts at all levels; national, regional and international, in assisting developing countries to enhance their capacity-building process and to better understand the various aspects of ICT are certainly needed. Such a cooperation will help to ensure the developing countries that venturing into ICT will not be a risky stunt or a leap in the dark, but a well-prepared and safe journey to building a "global knowledge society". Let us work together to promote universal access to ICT in which all countries can find reasons to hope and possibilities to prosper.