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**CONFERENCE OF  
HEADS OF STATE/GOVERNMENT  
OF  
NON-ALIGNED  
COUNTRIES  
IN  
COLOMBO  
AUGUST 16-19, 1976**



Address by

**SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI**

Prime Minister of India



Madame President, Distinguished Heads of States and Governments,  
Comrades in our Common Quest:

As I stand on this tribune, before such a distinguished gathering of leaders, there is a feeling of exhilaration at the destiny which brings us together again. Since those early days after the last world war which saw the beginnings of freedom for our nations, our long road has been arduous at times, yet also resolute and purposeful. In 1947 the countries of Asia met in New Delhi for the first time to affirm their solidarity and their vision of the world they hoped to fashion. On that momentous occasion Jawaharlal Nehru gave utterance to the ardent yearnings of the peoples of Asia when he declared that they would no longer be petitioners in foreign chancelleries, nor pawns of anyone. He said, "We propose to stand on our own legs and to cooperate with all others who are prepared to cooperate with us." Taking the wide world-view for which our people are justly proud, he said, "Asia stretches her hand out in friendship to Europe and America as well as to our suffering brethren in Africa". . . "The universal human freedom also cannot be based on the supremacy of any particular class. It must be the freedom of the common man everywhere and full opportunities for him to develop."

There we saw the first seeds of the concept we call non-alignment which germinated in the Bandung Conference and grew firm roots in Belgrade. From Belgrade through Cairo, Lusaka and Algiers, the

non-aligned movement has grown in strength and effectiveness. The present Conference marks further advance of that vision, embodying as it does the global sweep of non-alignment. In a fast changing world, non-alignment remains the bulwark of an ever-widening area of peace, a shield against external pressures and a catalyst of a new world economic order based on equality and justice. It promotes and hastens change, itself remaining unchanged. We represent nations which, amidst their colourful diversity, are united in their unvarying search for freedom, equality, peace and stability, for their own peoples and for all the world. Non-alignment is the courage of true independence.

It is apt that having girdled the globe, this Conference should now return to our continent and onto the verdant isle of Sri Lanka. I bring to you, Madame President, and to your people the warm greetings of the Government and people of India. In convening this Conference in Colombo, we pay tribute to the steadfast and constructive role played by your gallant country, first under its dynamic leader, Mr S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, and now under your able guidance, in international affairs and within the non-aligned movement. The friendship of India and Sri Lanka dates back several centuries and embraces a kinship enriched by the interaction of religion, culture, art and literature. After freedom it has been stimulated by mutual trust and cooperation.

I take this opportunity to thank our good friend President Boumedienne of Algeria for the energetic leadership he has provided in the furtherance of our objectives during the last three years.

It is a matter of gratification to have amongst us President Tito, one of the founding fathers of our movement, whose continuing guidance we value.

It gives me special pleasure to see amongst us a host of new leaders of triumphant liberation movements and pioneer nation-builders. We all extend a warm welcome to the representatives of Angola, Cape Verde, Comoros, Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Panama, Sao Tome and Principe,

Seychelles and the P.L.O. We note with particular satisfaction the presence of the delegation of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. We rejoice in the historic victory of the peoples of this part of Asia and the reunification of Vietnam.

The concept of non-alignment was shaped in the long years of our national struggle, much before the Cold War developed and blocs were formed. The Cold War has ended, but has its legacy? Colonial rule has almost gone, but have its consequences? Many of our nations remain politically vulnerable to external pressures. The effort to undermine the power of nationalism and political cohesion, to discredit and remove leaders and governments who symbolise independent thinking and self-reliance, and to install more pliable individuals and parties, is unabated. Economic exploitation persists in old and new garbs. So do the technological disparities and psychological complexes bred by colonialism. Instead of diminishing, military presences are being extended, and theories of imagined power-vacuums are mooted to justify such action. All countries around the Indian Ocean, who wish this area to be a zone of peace, are perturbed by the establishment of bases and intrusion of rivalries. The aim of the non-aligned movement is to reinforce the strength of each of our nations to measure up to challenges. At the same time we stand for responsive cooperation. We are neither a bloc nor a Third World, but a part of this our only world. The task of the Conference should be to fortify the defences of peace by enhancing friendship and reducing divisions and disparities.

The era of the Cold War proved the soundness of non-alignment as perhaps the only practical policy for the preservation of the newly-won independence of many countries. To us, choice between one military bloc or another seemed irrelevant and unreal. Our choice was between independence and dependence, between progressing through cooperation or perishing through confrontation. That most States which achieved independence have joined the non-aligned family is vindication of the conceptual validity of non-alignment.

We must counsel ourselves to a sober introspection of the cause of the success of our movement and to an appraisal of how to carry it

forward. If today the non-aligned do constitute a force (albeit a moral one), it is because we represent a major dynamic of history. We stand for the inherent right of every nation, no matter how weak, to exist and progress in spite of notions of ideological conformity or the inevitability of war so compellingly propagated by the strong. We represent the spirit of cooperation. And our assessment has been proven more correct than the analyses of those who try to enforce their own ideological obsessions. Non-alignment, with its politico-economic basis, has a more powerful appeal. Unity amongst ourselves is essential for our movement to retain its utility. A united non-aligned group will make an impact on world peace and on the evolving of a new economic order for the millions of poor. A new international economic order can be realised only with a cohesive political driving force which recognises diversity, but looks at the situation beyond the mere technical solution of problems of trade, finance and raw materials. Unity will benefit our own countries as well as nations and peoples everywhere. In the absence of a united front, our voices will go unheard and unheeded. Therefore, our Summit should preserve the integrity of our movement and show courage and determination in consolidating our unity through closer coordination and cooperation.

The very success of our movement has led to efforts to divide and weaken us and to dilute the political content and positive thrust of our work. In recent months the non-aligned as a group and individual countries of the non-aligned movement have faced a variety of pressures. There has been angry criticism of our concerted stand at the United Nations and other international forums, and attempts at the destabilisation of established governments, amounting even to subversion. These must be resisted. Non-aligned countries should strongly repudiate any extension of outside presences and exertion of pressure. Domestic changes should be decided by peoples themselves, not dictated by the strategies and compulsions of others. In the process of gaining new adherents and sympathisers, we should not deviate from the basic philosophy which has given this movement its vigour and indeed its *raison d'être*.

The vitality, efficacy and achievements of the non-aligned movement have been due largely to its flexibility of action. Our deliberate rejection of bureaucratisation and rigid procedures has allowed us to concentrate on our objectives, rather than being entangled in procedural wrangles and jealousies.

Since we have questioned the logic of Cold War belligerency, it is but natural that we should be glad at the many moves towards rapprochement, which are cumulatively described as detente. The Helsinki Agreement is a welcome event. The present detente, which is limited in content and geographical scope, must be consolidated and extended to the rest of our globe. How can detente in Europe endure if other parts of the world are ravaged by proxy wars and competitive infiltration? Detente should include respect for non-alignment by others. It cannot co-exist with the destabilisation of non-aligned States. Nor can it usher in real peace, without a serious effort at total disarmament. Detente should result in active co-existence and cooperation in which blocs and spheres of influence become redundant.

The peace that was arranged after World War II did not hold because it totally ignored a vast part of mankind which includes all our nations. In any compacts for peace, our views cannot be set aside merely because we are economically and militarily weak. Neither balance of power nor deterrence by terror offers lasting solutions. Time and again, the human spirit has prevailed over military power. A small Asian nation has given yet another triumphant demonstration of the strength of the strengthless. Peace can be attained only by harnessing the cooperation of all nations. The non-aligned have always been allies of peace.

Emerging polycentrism has generated rivalries no less fierce than bipolar confrontations. We should be vigilant against attempts to split our movement, to violate its integrity or to introduce discords from outside. We should not allow such differences as may exist between some members on certain issues to affect our unity. With so many leaders, the Conference is too important to spend time on bilateral

matters. There are risks when national goals completely supersede the collective purpose. India has always refrained from bringing up bilateral problems in the non-aligned or any international forums. We should all continue to observe the salutary practice of keeping out of our discussions any problems that might dilute our solidarity. Internal problems should be dealt with or resolved through patient bilateral negotiations, insulated from external complications.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the rallying cry of deprived peoples was independence. Today it should be self-reliance. As we seek a rightful place for ourselves in the contemporary world and are occupied in building our economics with the help of new knowledge, our development is impeded by the disparities and frustrations of the old order. Our people are not, nor can we expect them to be, tolerant of the present status quo of dependence and inequality. The world must evolve a new equilibrium of equitable interdependence in which the political independence and economic self-reliance of the weakest and smallest nations are fully protected. It implies the creation of a degree of mutual dependence which is of mutual benefit, without loss of identity or sovereignty.

Since we last met in Algiers there have been important developments in international economic relations. These have demonstrated that the possession of resources does not by itself match the advantage of those who command technology. It is only fair to demand a more just return for our commodities, but we cannot relax our efforts at reaching higher levels of self-reliance. Technological progress is not unthinking duplication of the designs of life prevalent in affluent countries. Consumerism is no blessing to us. Our objective should be a level of technology which provides the minimum material and cultural needs of our people and which will enable us to withstand threats to freedom, political pressures and unequal economic deals. The development of human skills to harness material resources within a nation is helped by more purposive cooperation amongst nations. As non-aligned countries we have been tirelessly advocating friendships which



rise above political blocs. As non-aligned developing countries we should promote greater economic cooperation between developed and developing countries, and discourage ideas of economic confrontation. The community of nations should jointly and peacefully achieve that elusive equation between global production and consumption that yields the right share for each nation.

The response of advanced countries to the compulsions of a new world economic order has so far been apathetic. Patchwork remedies are no substitute for genuine reform. We need a global perspective plan which will relate resources to human needs and provide a system of early warnings of imbalances and disasters. Improved terms of trade and credit, easier access to markets and better value for raw materials and industrial goods are all essential to secure greater equity in the distribution of benefits. Cooperation between and among our fraternity will enhance our strength in the dialogue with the economically stronger.

At Algiers and since, we have formulated programmes of concrete action for intra-non-aligned cooperation. It is time now to pool our resources and our experience. The focus should be on the scope of functional cooperation. The Non-aligned News Agency Pool is an example of our determination to be better informed about each other on political events as well as economic development. I hope we shall evolve new patterns of sharing our technological skills and resources as a means of gaining individual and collective strength, and finally break away from clinging colonial legacies and values. On its part India has offered economic and technical cooperation to many countries and has provided technical experts and training facilities.

We are confronted with challenge and opportunity. The challenge—despite tremendous pressures, to reinforce our basic unity and integrity, to rededicate ourselves to the principles that have served us so well. The opportunity—through collective power and united will, to achieve enduring peace and freedom for all—peace through detente,

disarmament and cooperation, and freedom through development, maintaining our distinctive personalities.

Let non-alignment give a lead in true independence, in new ideals for a harmonious world society, in a new concept of human emancipation and in new designs for national progress.

Years ago Jawaharlal Nehru said :

“The door is open and destiny beckons to all. There is no question of who wins and who loses, for we have to go forward and together as comrades and either all of us win or we all go down together, but there is going to be no failure. We go forward to success.”



