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Director General of the Museums Department,

Y.Bhg. Dato' Ho May Yong
Deputy Secretary General (Multilateral Affairs)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia,

Yang Mulia Ambassador Raja Nushirwan Zainal Abidin
Deputy Secretary General (Bilateral Affairs)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It gives me great pleasure to see so many of Wisma's friends – old and new – here today. I am glad that you are able to join us in what is yet another milestone for Malaysia, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs specifically. This afternoon will see the official launch of the Ministry's exhibition, *Diplomacy@60: Then & Now*.
2. It is a milestone because this is an exhibition 60 years in the making.
3. This is the first time ever that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is finally opening itself – and its history – up to the general public. Diplomacy is by tradition a closed-door affair; the Ministry that handles diplomacy is equally introvert by nature, but extrovert by deed. What we do at the Ministry is not always known, or told, to the people at large. Only a small section of the population actually knows what we do.
4. But the things we do impact upon the general public's safety and security. The public may not know it, but the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is at the frontline of the national interest and the nation's first line of defence.

Honoured guests,

5. The idea of a Ministry of Foreign Affairs was a mere twinkle in the eye of Chief Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman when his party won the general elections in 1955. It found expression only in 1956 when a Department of External Relations was born.

6. The rest, as they say, is history. But it is a history that has remained largely untold. At least until this exhibition.

7. In November last year the Ministry realised that we needed to do something big for the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations with the outside world. With this in mind, in November 2016, we sat down with Muzium Negara to discuss a possible exhibition.

8. As a collaborator, Muzium Negara has been an excellent mentor, guiding us in what we needed to do for an exhibition of this scale, allowing us free rein over what our exhibition would look like, and giving us the opportunity to showcase the Ministry and Malaysia's 60 years of diplomatic relations.

9. I must admit that getting the exhibition off the ground has been a journey of sorts for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As I said before, this is the first time ever that the Ministry is organising an exhibition of this scale. First, we had to overcome our 'shyness' – maybe reticence is a better word - in telling our story.

10. Second, our tools of the trade are the words and sentences of reports and analysis, not the pictures and descriptive adjectives of the museum world.

11. Third, what the Ministry is marking with this anniversary is only possible with the partners that we began with, way back in 1957.

12. For the Ministry, it was a journey of self-reflection. Finding the material for the exhibition meant that we needed to know the Ministry intimately – who were the people that made the Ministry what it is today, the milestones that we reached in the last six decades, the things that we hold near and dear.

13. Just before Christmas last year, we sat down with our partners – the nations that were there at our beginning – and asked them if they would like to participate in the exhibition. The answer was a resounding yes.

14. So tonight and for the coming weeks, the diplomatic community will also join us in this exhibition in celebration of their journey with us.

15. I would like to recognise these countries who started with us in 1957, and who have joined us in this exhibition:

- 15.1 Australia
- 15.2 Belgium
- 15.3 Canada
- 15.4 Cambodia
- 15.5 Egypt
- 15.6 France
- 15.7 Germany
- 15.8 Indonesia
- 15.9 India
- 15.10 Italy
- 15.11 Japan
- 15.12 the Netherlands
- 15.13 New Zealand
- 15.14 Pakistan
- 15.15 Sri Lanka
- 15.16 Thailand
- 15.17 the United Kingdom; and
- 15.18 the United States of America

16. Please give them a round of applause.

17. These are the eighteen countries that have set up 'home' in the gallery we will see shortly. We should not forget Portugal, which also started relations with us in 1957 but does not have an embassy in Malaysia.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

18. Sixty years ago, Malaysia not only reached out to friendly countries of the world; we were also admitted into the United Nations. It is in recognition of Malaysia's membership that we have recreated the UN podium, as a photo opportunity for visitors to the exhibition. And yes, UN Headquarters gave us their blessing for this.

19. As you know, diplomacy, apart from being a semi-clandestine affair is also one of the driest subjects for those who don't follow the issues. So to ensure that there is something for all levels of society, we have created pockets of the exhibition which are interactive.

20. The UN section is one; there's also a photo flip chart where visitors can test their knowledge of world leaders, and of course there is the touchscreen kiosk with information and quiz questions.

21. In addition, there are some items on display which have never before been exhibited anywhere else, items that are peculiar only to the Ministry, items such as Letters of Credence and Letters of Recall and the Diplomatic Mail and Cargo.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

22. I shall refrain from touching too much in the contents of the exhibition – the exhibition will speak for itself.

23. However, I must record the Ministry's appreciation to everyone who has been a part of this exhibition – to the Muzium Negara team under Mr. Azmi Ismail; the creative team at TwoUnid under Mr. Yusry who designed the layout and the panels; the generous people who have lent items for display; the many walking institutional memories in the form of Malaysia's ex-ambassadors who have related their stories and shared their experiences.

24. I was informed that throughout the years there have been various attempts to organise an exhibition to showcase the history of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I am proud to say that the first time we managed to pull this off. Well done to the team at the Division of Communications and Public Diplomacy who spent a lot of effort in turning this dream into a reality.

25. Finally, it is a proud moment for the Ministry, and for me personally, to have all of you here for this official launching.

26. Dengan lafaz Bismillahirrahmanirahhim, I hereby declare "Diplomacy @ 60: Then & Now" exhibition officially open.

END