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MALAYSIA

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Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh,

His Excellency Mr Khairy Jamaluddin

Minister of Youth and Sports, Malaysia

Your Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Let me welcome all of you to the first ever International Conference for Young Leaders.
2. Organised by the Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development, the theme of today's event is Changing Communities Through Social Entrepreneurship. The intention of the conference is to explore social entrepreneurship as a new global economic model, to expand opportunities for youth in this field, and to highlight its importance in generating long term sustainability and inclusivity, both here in Malaysia, in ASEAN and in the world.
3. Malaysia has reached the half way point on our journey towards Vision 2020. But working towards the goal of becoming a high-income nation within five years requires efforts on many different fronts.

4. The New Economic Model provides the framework and environment to empower private enterprise and to reduce income disparities. Within that, the Ministry of Youth and Sport has a very important role to play in encouraging progressive young leaders and to promote the development of social entrepreneurship.

5. What is social entrepreneurship? And why is it important? The concept may be quite new in Malaysia, but we already have several resourceful social entrepreneurs. These people are special. They see opportunities rather than problems and apply the fundamentals of business to create a more equitable society. These people are not looking for jobs, they are creating jobs.

6. But there can be many more of them. I believe that, given the opportunity, young people with the desire to change the world will use the social business model to have deep, positive and lasting impacts on social and environmental issues.

7. As President Kennedy once put it: “Energy, a readiness to question, imagination and creativity are all attributes of youth.” And to that he might have added that the altruism and idealism of young people make them the perfect candidates to be a new generation of social entrepreneurs. Already more and more Malaysians are stepping up to fill the gaps, improving the lives of their fellow citizens and helping us move towards becoming a developed nation using the tools and principles of social entrepreneurship.

8. We salute their efforts, and wish to support them in any way that we can. This is why in 2013, I committed RM20 million to set up a social entrepreneurship arm under the Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre, or MaGIC. The fund is being used to nurture and develop the social entrepreneurship sector in Malaysia through research, training and investment. There are many opportunities for growth, not least

in strengthening existing networks and in brokering relationships with the private and public sectors, potential funders, and service providers from within Malaysia and ASEAN.

9. The fund is also increasing recognition and awareness of the sector, building the financial and human capital of the ecosystem and creating connectedness amongst the key players. From helping social entrepreneurs to pilot their idea or scale their impact, to teaching them business skills, MaGIC Social Entrepreneurship is now a one-stop shop for social entrepreneurs in Malaysia to inspire a whole new generation to become active citizens, and to encourage current social enterprises to reach more and more people.

10. The Ministry of Youth and Sports, through the Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development, provides the opportunities and space for young social entrepreneurs to develop new ways to improve socio-economic and cultural well-being.

11. And the theme of this conference, which I thank the Institute for organising, is no abstract. “Changing Communities through Social Entrepreneurship” is something that is measurable: through wealth accumulation; by an increase in sustainable economic opportunities; through ensuring that the low-income elements of our workforce and those living in marginalized communities in Malaysia have a livable income; and through increases in happiness, health, security and healthy lifestyle across our society.

12. Those practising social entrepreneurship also gain in terms of business, technical and functional skills, not to mention the inculcation of the noble human values that come from striving to better the lives of others.

13. I am glad to see we have gathered here today individual participants, non-governmental organizations, academics, civil society groups, government departments and corporations to showcase new initiatives and to inspire everyone present to come up with new solutions for all our communities. Bringing together research institutions, social entrepreneurs and government departments can only strengthen knowledge, understanding and awareness in the social entrepreneurship movement.
14. In particular I would like to mention the participation of Social Enterprise Malaysia; the community builders, Tandemic; the Biji-Biji Initiative, a sustainable living and green technology advocacy organization; MaGIC; the Committee for ASEAN Youth Cooperation; and the design thinking group GENOVASI.
15. The hard work and commitment of those here today is a testament to the capacity of Malaysian youth to become the leaders of tomorrow. This conference is a good example of the efforts by the Ministry of Youth and Sport to support outstanding young Malaysians who are role models for us all, and to encourage young social entrepreneurs.
16. I am especially looking forward to meeting the finalists and recipients of the Hope Awards 2015, which will honour Malaysia's best youth-led organizations and the companies that support them.
17. I strongly urge our local industry players, businesses and researchers to use this platform to tap into the huge potential for collaborations, knowledge transfers and joint ventures. Working relationships forged today could be the beginnings of many fruitful partnerships in the years to come.
18. These are exactly what we need to help accomplish our aims to transform Malaysia into a high-income economy. Social entrepreneurship will be key to creating an

economy based on knowledge and innovation, and I commend the Ministry of Youth and Sport for its efforts in supporting our young people in their ambitions to compete internationally in a field which is, I believe, ultimately a tool for advancing civilization and the well-being of humanity.

19. This year, Malaysia is the Chair of ASEAN, and social entrepreneurship will be a focus throughout the activities that have been planned.

It can be an inspiration for us as we develop policies for economic development and a more equitable economy.

20. Congratulations to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, other ministries, agencies, NGOS, individuals and especially to The Institute for Youth Research for successfully organizing this conference.

21. Congratulations also to all the young people who have devoted so much time to the enterprises and initiatives we are celebrating today and who provide an example that we want to encourage many others to follow. To all delegates of ICYL: I urge you to be agents of change for the good of all your nations.

22. And now, I am delighted to declare this conference officially open.

Thank you.