

**Address By Prime Minister Of Malaysia At The Closing Session Of
The 74h World Health Assembly**

By : YAB TAN SRI DATO' HAJI MUHYIDDIN BIN HAJI MOHD
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**ADDRESS BY
YAB TAN SRI MUHYIDDIN YASSIN
PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA**

AT

**THE CLOSING SESSION OF
THE 74h WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
1 JUNE 2021, GENEVA (VIRTUAL)**

Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus [Ge-Bray-Ye-Sus],
Director-General of the World Health Organization;

Her Excellency Dasho Wangmo,
President of the 74th World Health Assembly;

Distinguished Delegates and Participants;

1. Let me begin by thanking Dr. Ghebreyesus for giving me the honour and opportunity to address the closing session of the 74th World Health Assembly.

2. The theme of the Assembly for this year is apt. Global resilience requires us to not only address the current crisis but also protect our people from future pandemics.

3. Malaysia applauds the WHO for designating 2021 as the International Year of Health and Care Workers. We are humbled by their abundant sacrifices. We are in awe of their courage and fortitude in the fight against COVID-19. We owe the healthcare front liners of the world a debt of gratitude, including in Malaysia. You have saved countless lives and the futures of generations.

4. From the beginning of the pandemic, Malaysia took a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach, based on scientific data and public health recommendations, in addressing the unprecedented health crisis. We executed a clear strategy which focused on three thrusts: expanding our healthcare delivery system to prevent spread and tend to the infected, providing strategic fiscal injections to safeguard the economy and protecting the people's livelihoods.

5. In improving our healthcare delivery system, we empowered the Ministry of Health (MoH) to be at the forefront of the pandemic response. The Malaysian Government swiftly increased budget allocations and to date, we have spent RM 69.3 billion (roughly USD 16.7 billion) on boosting healthcare capacity, which constitutes 4.89 percent of GDP. It is the largest and most acute rise in spending for public healthcare in Malaysian history. This also includes investments in the wider use of technology – from contact tracing and digital vaccination certificates on hand held mobile devices, blockchain for vaccination management systems to the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning to identify hotspot for outbreaks of disease.

6. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge us in so many ways. Aerosol transmission, multiple variants and pandemic fatigue have made containment of the infection difficult especially for countries like Malaysia where our economy is driven by small and medium enterprises in our multi-racial demography where culture is diverse. The only hope for our world to end this pandemic is to ensure as many people are vaccinated as rapidly as possible. Now, even as I speak, Malaysia like many other countries globally is facing another surge in cases. Our healthcare front liners are once again under tremendous pressure and the resilience of our health care systems are being tested day by day, and thankfully holding up thus far.

7. Malaysia reiterates its call for universal access to COVID-19 vaccines. These vaccines must be affordable and accessible to all. We joined the

COVAX Facility to facilitate the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines globally and commend the WHO for spearheading this effort. I am delighted to note that Malaysia has started receiving the delivery of the vaccines procured through COVAX.

8. But unlike countries from the West, we have had to wait for our supplies, initially trickling in, which brings me to this – we can only be safe when everyone is safe. Vaccine equity is still a major issue and we cannot win this war against the virus unless everyone has equal and rapid access to vaccines. Malaysia's commitment to Universal Health Care extends to its non-citizens. The Government of Malaysia continues to provide free health screening and treatment for COVID 19 infections, and will offer free vaccination to everyone in our country, whatever their citizenship or immigration status.

9. Since late February, under Malaysia's National COVID-19 Immunisation Programme, we have successfully inoculated just over 5% of our population. This is nowhere as fast as we had hoped, but our pace is very much dependent on the supply and delivery of vaccines from the manufacturers. Malaysia requires 53 million doses of vaccines to meet the needs of 70% of its population. To date, we have only received just under 3.2 million doses or 6% of our required doses. With the expected arrivals of more vaccines in the next couple of months, we hope to increase our daily vaccination rate from 100,000 to between 200,000 to 300,000 per day, so Malaysia can achieve herd immunity against COVID-19 before the end of this year.

10. Malaysia is scaling up vaccinations through public and private health partnerships, and also implementing many good practices observed from other countries – from the citizen engagement and outreach of countries like Bhutan, drive-through vaccinations as in Arizona, USA to the use of mega vaccination sites from now under-utilised convention centres and stadiums also done by our neighbours in Thailand and many countries in our region. The roll out of vaccinations offers hope for us to win the war on COVID-19. It has already, evidently, done so much good in wealthy countries which have an abundant access to vaccines but we need ALL countries to have the same opportunity.

Distinguished Participants,

11. Malaysia is very grateful for the confidence placed in us by the Member States of the Western Pacific Region, as a new incoming member of the WHO's Executive Board.

12. We are committed to working closely with the WHO and other countries in strategic partnerships, as guided by the General Programme of Work 13 to achieve Universal Health Coverage, address health emergencies and promote healthier populations, in line with the 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals.

13. I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to address some less mentioned concerns. Firstly, the impact of this pandemic on mental health and social well-being. There is nothing natural about self-isolation and the toll it takes on our global citizens, young and old, the disruptions to education, work and social norms and will require us to endure a healing process that will take time.

14. Secondly, the findings from the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response has given us clear analysis and recommendations so that together, we can make this the last pandemic. While we must commit to taking action and ensuring multilateral cooperation and commitment to achieve this goal, let us also not forget that the rise in zoonosis and pandemic risks has a direct correlation with transgressions of our planetary boundaries, and our future development must consider the protection and health of our planet.

15. While the end to the COVID-19 pandemic may still be some time away, we in Malaysia hope that the global situation will continue to improve. Imagine the benefit to all of humanity if only more vaccines were immediately made available to people in need across the globe. We welcome the call for a people's vaccine, and the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights or TRIPs waiver, to allow vaccine manufacturing in the developing world.

16. This is a fight we cannot afford to lose. You can certainly count on Malaysia being a strong partner to WHO to create a healthier, happier and more equitable world for all.

Thank you.

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