

**SPEECH BY  
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI  
AT 35TH I.F.T.D.O. WORLD CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION 2006  
AT KUALA LUMPUR CONVENTION CENTRE KLCC)  
22 AUGUST 2006**

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ASSALAMUALAIKUM WARAHMATULLAHI WABARAKATUH AND GOOD AFTERNOON

YB DATO' MUSTAPA MOHAMAD  
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EXCELLENCIES, AMBASSADORS AND HIGH COMMISIONERS

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MEMBERS OF THE I.F.T.D.O. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS

DELEGATES

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

1. IT IS AN HONOUR FOR ME TO ADDRESS THIS "35TH I.F.T.D.O. WORLD CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION ON TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT 2006". ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF MALAYSIA, I AM PLEASED TO WELCOME ALL OF YOU, PARTICULARLY OUR FOREIGN GUESTS, TO MALAYSIA. I WISH TO ALSO THANK THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS (I.F.T.D.O.) FOR INVITING ME TO DELIVER THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS AND TO OFFICIALLY LAUNCH THIS IMPORTANT EVENT.

2. I SEE THIS CONFERENCE AS BOTH CRITICAL AND TIMELY GIVEN THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN PRODUCING PRODUCTIVE MEMBERS OF THE WORKFORCE THAT CAN PROPEL FORWARD A NATION'S ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT. INDEED, THE POSITIVE IMPACT THAT A SUSTAINED FOCUS ON HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE INDIVIDUAL, FIRM AND NATIONAL LEVELS IS READILY APPARENT. WHAT IS LESS APPARENT ARE THE APPROPRIATE METHODS AND POLICIES THAT SHOULD BE ADOPTED AT ALL THREE LEVELS TO FURTHER HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT.

3. THAT IS WHY THIS GATHERING OF LEADERS, SCHOLARS AND POLICY-MAKERS IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IS SO CRUCIAL. I BELIEVE THAT IN EXAMINING CURRENT AND FUTURE TRENDS AS WELL AS IN SHARING

EXPERIENCES AND BEST PRACTICES, WE MAY COME TO A CONSENSUS ON HOW BEST TO PREPARE OUR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES' HUMAN CAPITAL WITH THE NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ETHICS TO SUCCEED IN THE FUTURE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

4. I AM PLEASED TO NOTE THAT THE THEME CHOSEN FOR THIS YEAR'S I.F.T.D.O. WORLD CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION IS "EDUCATION AND TRAINING HARMONISED". THE FOCUS ON HARMONISING THE FIELDS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING – THAT IS, ON HARMONISING THE ACADEMIC AND VOCATIONAL AS WELL AS THE THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL – IS, I BELIEVE THE RIGHT WAY FORWARD. IN THE INCREASINGLY GLOBALISED WORLD OF TODAY, ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION TOOLS HAVE GIVEN RISE TO NEW PRODUCTION AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES. THEREFORE, THE CAPACITY FOR HUMAN CAPITAL TO BE RESPONSIVE, FLEXIBLE AND INNOVATIVE IN THE FACE OF THESE CHANGES IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS IN THIS NEW ENVIRONMENT.

5. INDEED, THE MOST PRECIOUS ASSET OF ANY NATION IS ITS PEOPLE. THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN CAPITAL, THAT IS, THE UPGRADING OF SKILL-SETS AND KNOWLEDGE-BASE OF A NATION, IS ULTIMATELY THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE OF ANY MODERN SOCIETY. IN ORDER TO BECOME A KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY, THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN CAPITAL MUST BE MADE A PRIORITY.

6. THAT IS WHY IN LEADING THE TRANSFORMATION OF MALAYSIA INTO A KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY, I HAVE MADE A CONSCIOUS DECISION THAT, ALONGSIDE INVESTMENTS IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND OTHER FORMS OF TANGIBLE DEVELOPMENT, INVESTMENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE WILL ALSO BE GIVEN A STRONGER FOCUS. I BELIEVE THAT THE CONDITIONS ARE RIPE TO BUILD UPON MALAYSIA'S STRONG BASE OF HUMAN CAPITAL, TO SCALE IT UP, IN ORDER TO PROPEL MALAYSIA TO NEW HEIGHTS OF ECONOMIC SUCCESS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

7. MALAYSIA'S INVESTMENT IN HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT OVER THE YEARS HAS BEEN THE SECRET OF OUR ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SUCCESS. BY MAKING BIG INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING – WHICH MAKE UP ABOUT A FIFTH OF THE GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET EVERY YEAR SINCE INDEPENDENCE – WE HAVE MANAGED TO RAISE THE GENERAL EDUCATION LEVEL OF THE PEOPLE, INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY, AND TRANSFORM THE ECONOMY. ECONOMIC SUCCESS HAS ALSO LED TO THE IMPROVEMENT IN PEOPLE'S LIVING STANDARDS, WITH POVERTY HAVING BEEN SHARPLY REDUCED FROM OVER 50 PER CENT IN THE 1970'S, TO A MERE 5.7 PER CENT CURRENTLY. INDEED, MALAYSIA IS OFTEN CITED BY THE WORLD BANK AND OTHER MULTILATERAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES AS ONE OF THE BEST SUCCESS STORIES IN POVERTY REDUCTION.

8. SOCIAL STABILITY AS WELL AS THE AVAILABILITY OF A HIGHLY TRAINED AND HIGHLY TRAINABLE WORKFORCE ARE ALSO KEY REASONS FOR THE HIGH LEVELS OF FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (F.D.I.) FLOWS INTO MALAYSIA OVER THE YEARS. THIS TREND HAS CONTINUED WITH LARGE GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY FIRMS LIKE DELL, INTEL AND INFINEON RAISING THEIR INVESTMENT LEVELS IN MALAYSIA, EVEN AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF STRONG ECONOMIC GROWTH IN CHINA AND INDIA. THIS IS EVIDENCE OF INVESTOR CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO UPGRADE THE EDUCATION AND SKILL LEVEL OF THE POPULATION AND TO BUILD UP A POOL OF KNOWLEDGE WORKERS THAT CAN MEET THEIR CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS.

9. NEVERTHELESS, MALAYSIA CANNOT AFFORD TO BE CONTENT WITH OUR CURRENT PROGRESS. JUST AS THE BUSINESS WORLD KEEPS CHANGING, TO KEEP AHEAD MALAYSIA MUST CONSTANTLY KEEP ABREAST OF THOSE CHANGES AND MAKE THE NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS TO ITS POLICIES. THE NATIONAL MISSION – WHICH IS A 15-YEAR POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING MALAYSIA'S DEVELOPMENT GOALS AS STATED IN VISION 2020 – CLEARLY ARTICULATES THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AS PART OF THE COUNTRY'S OVERALL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY. INDEED, THE SECOND OF THE FIVE THRUSTS OF THE NATIONAL MISSION IS TO “RAISE THE COUNTRY'S CAPACITY FOR KNOWLEDGE, CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION AND NURTURE A ‘FIRST CLASS MENTALITY’”.

10. THIS MEANS THAT THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO UNDERTAKE COMPREHENSIVE IMPROVEMENT OF THE COUNTRY'S EDUCATION SYSTEM, FROM PRE-SCHOOL TO TERTIARY AND VOCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS. AT THE SAME TIME, HEAVIER EMPHASIS ON TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AS WELL AS THE SHAPING OF MORAL VALUES WILL BE EMPHASISED TO CREATE MORE WELL-ROUNDED INDIVIDUALS FOR THE CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKFORCE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

11. IN ORDER TO SUCCESSFULLY ADDRESS NEW CHALLENGES – COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY DEVELOPING ONES – MUST BEGIN TO READJUST THE DIRECTION OF THEIR HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES, ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS, AND STRENGTHEN THEIR HUMAN CAPITAL. I HOPE THAT THIS CONFERENCE WILL TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THESE ISSUES IN GREATER DETAIL. IN ORDER TO PROVIDE SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT IN YOUR DISCUSSIONS, ALLOW ME TO HUMBLY SHARE WITH YOU WHAT I THINK ARE SOME OF THE KEY STRATEGIES THAT CAN BE UTILISED TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY, DELIVERY AND RELEVENCE OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

12. FIRSTLY, I BELIEVE THAT TO BE EFFECTIVE, AN EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM MUST FOCUS ON EQUIPPING PEOPLE WITH THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE THAT MAKE THEM PRODUCTIVE IN THE WORKFORCE. FOR THIS PURPOSE, “FUNCTIONAL TRAINING” MUST BE PROVIDED TO ENSURE THAT THE WORKFORCE HAS THE SPECIFIC SKILLS REQUIRED BY INDUSTRIES AND OTHER EMPLOYERS. WHILE KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION MAY BE MORE EASILY ACCESSIBLE NOW,

MOST PEOPLE REQUIRE FURTHER TRAINING TO BE ABLE TO TRANSFORM THAT KNOWLEDGE INTO SOMETHING THAT IS VALUABLE AND MEANINGFUL. IN THAT SENSE, PEOPLE NEED TO BE EDUCATED ON HOW TO USE KNOWLEDGE TO THEIR ADVANTAGE, TO CREATE VALUE IN THEIR PERSONAL LIVES AND IN THEIR WORK.

13. FUNCTIONAL SKILLS ARE THOSE CORE ELEMENTS OF LANGUAGE, MATHEMATICS AND I.C.T. THAT PROVIDE AN INDIVIDUAL WITH THE ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND UNDERSTANDING THAT WILL ENABLE THEM TO OPERATE CONFIDENTLY, EFFECTIVELY AND INDEPENDENTLY IN LIFE AND AT WORK. INDIVIDUALS OF WHATEVER AGE WHO POSSESS THESE SKILLS WILL BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE AND PROGRESS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT AS WELL AS DEVELOP THE BROADER RANGE OF APTITUDES, ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS THAT WILL ENABLE THEM TO MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITIES IN WHICH THEY LIVE AND WORK.

14. THIS MEANS THAT WE MUST BEGIN TO REASSESS WHAT WE TEACH AND HOW WE TEACH OUR STUDENTS, OUR EMPLOYEES AND OUR CITIZENS AS A WHOLE. INDEED, AS WE ENTER A TIME WHERE KNOWLEDGE FLOWS ARE INCREASINGLY COMPLEX, EFFORTS MUST BE MADE TO ENSURE THAT OUR PEOPLE ARE ABLE TO COPE WITH COMPLEX KNOWLEDGE FLOWS AND, INDEED, TO MANAGE AND THRIVE AS A RESULT.

15. SECONDLY, A CULTURE OF LIFE-LONG-LEARNING MUST BE DEVELOPED. IN TODAY'S DYNAMIC WORKING ENVIRONMENT, ONE NEEDS TO BE HIGHLY FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTABLE TO SUCCEED IN THE LONG-TERM. THEREFORE, THERE IS A CONSTANT NEED TO RE-EQUIP ONESELF WITH NEW KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS. IT MUST BE SAID THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE THIS FORM OF TRAINING DOES NOT JUST LIE WITH THE GOVERNMENT. THE PRIVATE SECTOR, AS A MAJOR SOURCE OF EMPLOYMENT, MUST ALSO PLAY ITS ROLE TO TRAIN AND VALUE-ADD THEIR EMPLOYEES. IN THAT SENSE, THE COST OF EDUCATING AND TRAINING SHOULD NOT BE SEEN AS AN ADDITIONAL EXPENSE TO BE BORNE, BUT AS AN INVESTMENT FOR THE FUTURE.

16. THIRDLY, IN ORDER TO ALIGN EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO THE CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS, THERE IS A PRESSING NEED TO GET INDUSTRY GROUPS — THE FUTURE EMPLOYERS— TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN SHAPING THE CONTENT, DELIVERY AND ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING. THIS IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL. INDEED, MANY SCHOLARS HAVE CONSIDERED UNIVERSITY-INDUSTRY COOPERATION AS A CRITICAL ISSUE IN MAINTAINING NATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS.

17. THE ADVANTAGES OF GREATER UNIVERSITY-INDUSTRY LINKAGES IS READILY APPARENT. INDUSTRY'S INPUT AT THE CURRICULUM DESIGN, DELIVERY AND ASSESSMENT STAGE CAN ENSURE THAT GRADUATES ARE EQUIPPED WITH KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS THAT ARE HIGHLY SOUGHT AFTER BY EMPLOYERS. MOREOVER, UNIVERSITY-INDUSTRY LINKAGES ARE ALSO PIVOTAL IN FURTHER DEVELOPING THE FIELD OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (R&D), WHICH IS A BASIC REQUIREMENT TO INCREASE THE COUNTRY'S INNOVATIVE CAPACITY.

INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT IN UNIVERSITY-BASED RESEARCH PROJECTS CAN BE IN THE FORM OF FUNDING, COMMISSIONING AND DESIGNING RESEARCH PROJECTS, AND COLLABORATING WITH UNIVERSITY RESEARCHERS. BY DOING SO, THEY ARE ABLE TO LEVERAGE ON THE UNIVERSITY'S RESOURCES, INCLUDING HIGHLY-TRAINED RESEARCHERS AND SPECIALISED TECHNOLOGIES. FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS, THE CHANCE TO WORK ON COMMERCIALY DRIVEN RESEARCH PROJECTS PROVIDES INVALUABLE EXPOSURE TO REAL WORLD, INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGING RESEARCH PROBLEMS.

18. FOURTHLY, TO ENSURE THAT HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PROCESSES ARE IMPLEMENTED EFFECTIVELY, IN LINE WITH LARGER NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS, I BELIEVE THE STUDY OF HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT ITSELF MUST BE FORMALISED AND INSTITUTIONALISED. HERE, I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONGRATULATE "UNIVERSITY TECHNOLOGY MARA" (U.I.T.M.), NOT ONLY FOR SUCCESSFULLY ORGANISING THIS CONFERENCE, BUT ALSO FOR ESTABLISHING ITS "GLOBAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR HUMAN CAPITAL".

19. THE GLOBAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IS A COMMUNITY OF ACADEMICS, PRACTITIONERS AND PROFESSIONALS WITH THE MISSION TO DEVELOP RESEARCH CAPABILITIES IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT. THE CENTRE ALSO AIMS TO RAISE AWARENESS AND IDENTIFY THE MECHANISMS AND STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS; TO NETWORK GLOBALLY AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH ORGANIZATIONS AND INDUSTRIES FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT; AS WELL AS TO INITIATE AND REALIZE THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE LEARNING CULTURE IN U.I.T.M., AND BEYOND. THE "GLOBAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR HUMAN CAPITAL" IS CERTAINLY A SOLID FIRST STEP THAT I HOPE WILL LEAD TO MANY OTHER INITIATIVES ON THE ROAD TO ACHIEVE THE VISION OF "EDUCATION AND TRAINING HARMONIZED".

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

20. I WOULD LIKE TO END BY EXPRESSING MALAYSIA'S APPRECIATION TO THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS (I.F.T.D.O.) FOR GIVING MALAYSIA, MORE SPECIFICALLY, U.I.T.M., THE HONOUR TO HOST THE 35TH I.F.T.D.O. WORLD CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION. TO ALL DELEGATES, I WISH YOU THE BEST IN YOUR DISCUSSIONS OVER THE NEXT TWO DAYS AND BEYOND. THE SHARED EXPERIENCES AND DISCUSSIONS TAKEN HERE WILL GO A LONG WAY TOWARD IMPROVING THE GLOBAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING LANDSCAPE, THUS BUILDING A STRONGER, MORE DYNAMIC AND RESILIENT HUMAN CAPITAL BASE FOR THE FUTURE.

21. THEREFORE, I URGE ALL OF YOU TO USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO HOLD FRANK AND OPEN DISCUSSIONS, TO ACHIEVE A MORE POSITIVE OUTCOME OF THIS CONFERENCE, FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL. I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT IN WORKING TOGETHER, WE CAN ACHIEVE THAT MUCH MORE IN BUILDING UP HUMAN CAPITAL WITH THE NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO BE ASSETS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT. IN LINE WITH THIS, I WOULD LIKE TO ENCOURAGE ALL DELEGATES

— BUT PARTICULARLY THOSE FROM DEVELOPING COUNTRIES — TO UTILISE THE INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE GAINED AT THIS CONFERENCE TO IMPROVE THE DELIVERY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN YOUR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES. IT IS ONLY THROUGH THE CONTINUOUS PURSUIT OF EDUCATION THAT A NATION'S BANK OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS CAN BE UPGRADED, IN ORDER TO DRIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT.

22. ON THAT NOTE, IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO LAUNCH U.I.T.M.'S "GLOBAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR HUMAN CAPITAL" AND TO DECLARE THE "35TH I.F.T.D.O. WORLD CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION 2006 ON TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT" OFFICIALLY OPEN.

THANK YOU.