

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY  
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI  
AT THE 16TH WORLD CONGRESS ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
(W.C.I.T. 2008),  
AT KUALA LUMPUR CONVENTION CENTRE  
19 MAY 2008**

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THE HONOURABLE DATO' MAXIMUS J. ONGKILI  
MINISTER OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION OF MALAYSIA

HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND DEPUTY MINISTERS

MR. GEORGE NEWSTROM  
CHAIRMAN OF THE WORLD INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND SERVICES ALLIANCE  
(WITSA)

EXCELLENCIES AND DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

1. IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO JOIN YOU HERE AT THE LAUNCH OF THE 16TH WORLD CONGRESS ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (W.C.I.T. 2008).

2. TWO YEARS AGO IN AUSTIN, TEXAS, I HAD THE PRIVILEGE TO OFFICIALLY WITNESS THE W.C.I.T. CRYSTAL HANDOVER CEREMONY AT THE CLOSE OF THE 15TH WORLD CONGRESS. TODAY, I STAND BEFORE YOU ONCE AGAIN, THIS TIME TO WELCOME YOU TO KUALA LUMPUR FOR THE 16TH EDITION OF THE CONGRESS. ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF MALAYSIA, I WISH ALL OF YOU, ESPECIALLY OUR FOREIGN DELEGATES, "SELAMAT DATANG" OR 'WELCOME' TO MALAYSIA.

3. MALAYSIA IS HONOURED AND EXCITED TO HOST SUCH A LARGE GATHERING OF THOUGHT-LEADERS, POLICY-MAKERS, TECHNOPRENEURS, CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY AND MANY OTHER DISTINGUISHED PERSONALITIES. ALLOW ME THEREFORE TO EXPRESS OUR DEEPEST APPRECIATION TO THE 'WORLD INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND SERVICES ALLIANCE' (WITSA) FOR CHOOSING TO HOLD W.C.I.T 2008 IN MALAYSIA. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK WITSA FOR ACCEPTING MALAYSIA'S OFFER TO HOST THE WITSA SECRETARIAT IN CYBERJAYA, MALAYSIA; AND FOR SELECTING MR. DAN E. KHOO, THE CURRENT C.E.O. OF 'W.C.I.T. 2008', AS ITS NEW CHAIRMAN. I WOULD LIKE TO ASSURE WITSA THAT MALAYSIA WILL DO ITS UTMOST TO FURTHER ENCOURAGE THE GROWTH OF THE GLOBAL I.C.T. INDUSTRY, INCLUDING IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD.

4. I AM THEREFORE PLEASED TO SAY THAT PARTICIPATION IN W.C.I.T. 2008 HAS EXCEEDED EVEN OUR HIGHEST EXPECTATIONS. AT LAST COUNT WE HAVE MORE THAN 3,000 REGISTERED DELEGATES FROM OVER 80 COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE; FAR MORE THAN THE AMBITIOUS TARGET OF 2,500 DELEGATES THAT WE HAD SET FOR OURSELVES TWO YEARS AGO. WE APPRECIATE THIS OVERWHELMING SUPPORT AND VIEW IT AS A SIGN OF THE CONFIDENCE THAT THE WORLD HAS IN MALAYSIA'S I.C.T. CAPABILITIES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

5. WITHOUT A DOUBT, WE HAVE ENTERED INTO THE PROVERBIAL “BRAVE NEW WORLD”. WE LIVE IN AN AGE WHERE WE HAVE UNPRECEDENTED ACCESS TO INFORMATION; AND WE HAVE THE MEANS TO TRANSCEND TRADITIONAL BOUNDARIES AND RESTRICTIONS — ALL AT THE CLICK OF A BUTTON AND FROM THE COMFORT OF OUR HOMES AND OFFICES.

6. WE LIVE IN AN AGE WHERE OUR LIVES HAVE BECOME DEEPLY INTERCONNECTED; EACH ONE OF US NOW HAVING THE POTENTIAL NOT ONLY TO TAKE PART IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY, BUT TO INFLUENCE ITS DIRECTION AS WELL.

7. I.C.T. IS PLAYING A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN FACILITATING AND DRIVING THIS PHENOMENON. THROUGH I.C.T., WE NOW HAVE THE POWER TO TOUCH AND CHANGE THE LIVES OF BILLIONS OF PEOPLE WORLDWIDE — VIRTUALLY WITHOUT COST. BUSINESSES ARE ALSO FINDING NEW OPPORTUNITIES BY PROVIDING TECHNOLOGY-BASED SOLUTIONS THAT ALLOW PEOPLE TO CONDUCT THEIR DAILY LIVES IN A MORE FULFILLING AND REWARDING WAY.

8. NONETHELESS, EVEN AS WE CELEBRATE I.C.T.’S ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT, WE MUST ALSO BE AWARE OF THE POTENTIAL HARM THAT UNEQUAL ACCESS TO I.C.T. — BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS, COUNTRIES AND WORLD REGIONS — CAN GIVE RISE TO.

9. IF YOU MAY RECALL, IN MY ADDRESS TO THE WORLD CONGRESS AT AUSTIN BACK IN 2006, I SPOKE ON A NUMBER OF KEY ISSUES RELATED TO I.C.T. AND DEVELOPMENT. I TOUCHED UPON THE ROLE OF I.C.T. IN REDEFINING THE SKILLS AND TALENTS NEEDED TO SUCCEED IN THE 21ST CENTURY. I EMPHASISED THE NEED TO ADDRESS THE GROWING DIGITAL DIVIDE ACROSS THE GLOBE, WHICH I CONTINUE TO VIEW AS THE NEW POVERTY OF OUR AGE.

10. I ALSO STRESSED ON THE NEED TO INCULCATE A CULTURE OF DIGITAL LITERACY IN OUR SOCIETIES SO THAT EACH ONE OF US — NO MATTER WHO OR WHERE WE ARE IN THE WORLD — WILL BE ABLE TO PARTAKE IN THE BENEFITS OF I.C.T. AND THEREBY ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF OUR LIVES.

11. UNDOUBTEDLY, IN THE TWO YEARS THAT HAVE SINCE PASSED, THE WORLD HAS MADE GREAT STRIDES IN ADDRESSING THESE ISSUES. MORE AND MORE PEOPLE ARE GETTING ONTO THE INTERNET AND USING I.C.T. IN THEIR DAILY LIVES THAN EVER BEFORE. HOWEVER, WE MUST REMEMBER THAT FOR EVERY PERSON WHO IS DIGITALLY LITERATE, THERE ARE FAR TOO MANY MORE WHO ARE NOT.

12. I BELIEVE THAT WE CAN DO SO MUCH MORE TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION. AS SUCH, I WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS HERE WHERE WE HAD LEFT OFF IN AUSTIN.

13. I UNDERSTAND THAT THIS YEAR’S WORLD CONGRESS WILL BE DISCUSSING THE THEME OF “THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY: ENABLE BUSINESSES, EMPOWER SOCIETIES, ENRICH ECONOMIES”. THIS THEME IS BOTH TIMELY AND APT.

14. AS THE WORLD BECOMES MORE RELIANT ON TECHNOLOGY, EFFORTS MUST BE TAKEN TO UNDERSTAND ITS IMPACT ON HUMANITY. WE MUST UNDERSTAND IT SO THAT WE MAY CONTINUE TO HARNESS AND UTILISE ITS POWER IN A POSITIVE MANNER, FOR THE BENEFIT OF INDIVIDUALS, BUSINESSES, SOCIETIES AND ECONOMIES.

15. AS A DEVELOPING COUNTRY, MALAYSIA HAS LONG RECOGNISED THE POWER OF I.C.T. AS A TOOL TO ENABLE, EMPOWER AND ENRICH OUR PEOPLE. LIKE MANY GOVERNMENTS AROUND THE WORLD, WE VIEW I.C.T. AS AN ESSENTIAL TOOL TO PROVIDE US WITH A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE DIGITAL AGE. MOREOVER, AS A DEVELOPING COUNTRY WITH ASPIRATIONS TO TRANSFORM INTO A DEVELOPED ONE, WE SAW THE POTENTIAL OF I.C.T. IN ACCELERATING THIS TRANSITION.

16. OUR EXPERIENCE IN UTILISING I.C.T. FOR DEVELOPMENT HAS YIELDED MANY INTERESTING INSIGHTS AND LESSONS THAT I BELIEVE MAY BE USEFUL FOR OTHERS TO CONSIDER. ALLOW ME, THEREFORE, TO HUMBLLY SHARE WITH YOU SOME INSIGHTS INTO THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE, IN THE HOPE THAT IT MAY PROVIDE YOU WITH SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT IN YOUR UPCOMING DELIBERATIONS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

17. MALAYSIA JOINED THE I.C.T. REVOLUTION AT AN EARLY STAGE IN ITS DEVELOPMENT, UTILISING IT IN BUSINESS, EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE, INDUSTRIAL AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT, AS WELL AS IN MANY OTHER ASPECTS OF DAILY LIFE AND WORK.

18. THE SETTING UP OF THE MULTIMEDIA SUPER CORRIDOR OR 'M.S.C. MALAYSIA' TWELVE YEARS AGO WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN CATALYSING OUR ASPIRATION TO TRANSFORM THE NATION INTO A KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY. 'M.S.C. MALAYSIA' WAS ALSO SYMBOLIC OF OUR KEEN DESIRE TO BE AN IMPORTANT REGIONAL AND GLOBAL PLAYER IN THIS REMARKABLE I.C.T. REVOLUTION.

19. WE ARE PROUD THAT, TWELVE YEARS ON, 'M.S.C. MALAYSIA' HAS GROWN BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS. FROM A SINGLE CORRIDOR, 'MSC MALAYSIA' HAS NOW GROWN INTO A WEB OF CORRIDORS THAT EXTENDS ACROSS THE NATION. MANY I.C.T. AND I.C.T.-RELATED COMPANIES ENGAGED IN CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY HAVE EMERGED, PROVIDING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BENEFITS TO ALL MALAYSIANS AND UPLIFTING THEIR LIVES IN THE PROCESS. INDEED, I AM PARTICULARLY PLEASED TO SEE THE EXPANSION OF M.S.C. MALAYSIA FUELING THE GROWTH OF A NEW GENERATION OF I.C.T.-SAVVY CITIZENS AND KNOWLEDGE WORKERS.

20. RECOGNISING THE VALUE OF I.C.T. TO ENABLE AND EMPOWER OUR PEOPLE, MALAYSIA HAS ENDEAVORED TO INCREASE OUR DIGITAL LITERACY RATE AND ADOPT NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN A NUMBER OF AREAS WITH HIGH-SOCIAL IMPACT. IN THE PAST, 'M.S.C. MALAYSIA' FLAGSHIP APPLICATIONS HAVE INCLUDED E-GOVERNMENT, TELE-HEALTH, MULTI-PURPOSE SMART CARD, AS WELL AS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF "SMART SCHOOLS" WHERE I.C.T. IS UTILISED IN ALL ASPECTS OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND ADMINISTRATION.

21. WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO EMPOWERING OUR PEOPLE THROUGH I.C.T.. WE ARE CONTINUALLY DEVELOPING AND ADOPTING TECHNOLOGIES THAT BENEFIT PEOPLE IN THEIR DAILY LIVES. WE ARE ALSO ENDEAVOURING TO ENSURE THAT THE PROPER INFRASTRUCTURE IS IN PLACE TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY-BASED SOLUTIONS AMONG MALAYSIANS.

22. IN THIS REGARD, I AM PLEASED TO SAY THAT MALAYSIA'S NATIONAL BROADBAND INITIATIVE WILL SOON BE LAUNCHED. UNDER THIS INITIATIVE, BROADBAND SERVICES WILL BE EXPANDED TO REACH 50 PER CENT OF MALAYSIA'S HOUSEHOLDS BY THE YEAR 2010, A SHARP INCREASE FROM 15.5 PER CENT LAST YEAR. AFTER ALL, AS PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE DIGITAL AGE, CHEAP AND FAST ACCESS TO THE INTERNET IS NO LONGER A LUXURY; IT IS INCREASINGLY BECOMING A NECESSITY.

23. I AM ALSO PLEASED TO SAY THAT BEGINNING THIS MONTH, RESIDENTS IN THE KLANG VALLEY CONURBATION – WHICH INCLUDES KUALA LUMPUR AND SEVERAL ADJOINING CITIES AND TOWNS – WILL BE ABLE TO ENJOY HIGH-SPEED MOBILE BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY USING WIMAX TECHNOLOGY UNDER THE WIRELESS@KL (WIRELESS AT KL) INITIATIVE. THEY WILL ALSO HAVE ACCESS TO A NEWLY-CREATED KUALA LUMPUR CITY PORTAL AT 'KUL.COM.MY' (KUL DOT COM DOT MY).

24. UNDER MALAYSIA'S E-GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE, FOR EXAMPLE, SEVERAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES HAVE BEEN MADE AVAILABLE ON-LINE. SOON TO BE LAUNCHED IS A COMPREHENSIVE E-PAYMENT FACILITY INVOLVING OVER 100 GOVERNMENT AGENCIES. WE EXPECT THAT THROUGH E-GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES SUCH AS THESE, THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM — A KEY AGENDA OF MY GOVERNMENT-- WILL BE IMPROVED.

25. INDEED, I.C.T. HAS PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN HELPING TO RAISE THE EFFICIENCY AND COMPETITIVENESS OF MALAYSIA AS A WHOLE. I AM PLEASED TO NOTE THAT THE I.M.D. 'WORLD COMPETITIVENESS REPORT 2008', RELEASED ONLY LAST WEEK, HAD RANKED MALAYSIA AS THE 19TH MOST COMPETITIVE ECONOMY IN THE WORLD, SURPASSING EVEN GIANTS LIKE THE UNITED KINGDOM AND SOUTH KOREA. THIS IS A VAST IMPROVEMENT FROM OUR 23RD POSITION LAST YEAR. IT IS ALSO A STRONG TESTAMENT TO OUR ONGOING EFFORTS TO RAISE THE BAR ON MALAYSIA'S COMPETITIVENESS.

26. GOING FORWARD, WE WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE ALL THE NECESSARY STEPS, INCLUDING BY INVESTING FURTHER IN I.C.T. INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES, IN ORDER TO RAISE OUR COMPETITIVENESS AND PUT MALAYSIA ON THE FAST-TRACK TOWARDS THE INFORMATION AGE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

27. ON THE I.C.T. INDUSTRY FRONT, I AM PLEASED TO SAY THAT WE HAVE DONE RELATIVELY WELL. M.S.C. MALAYSIA IS NOW HOME TO MORE THAN 2,000 COMPANIES, INCLUDING HOME-GROWN COMPANIES AND MULTINATIONALS, OF WHICH ABOUT 100 ARE LEADING GLOBAL COMPANIES. IN 2007, THE TURNOVER OF M.S.C. STATUS COMPANIES WAS APPROXIMATELY 13.6 BILLION RINGGIT — AN INCREASE OF MORE THAN 25 PER CENT COMPARED TO 2002.

28. M.S.C. MALAYSIA STATUS COMPANIES ARE ALSO EXPORTING MORE, WITH EXPORT FIGURES FOR 2007 REPORTED TO BE 4.9 BILLION RINGGIT. THIS REPRESENTS AN INCREASE OF MORE THAN 40 PER CENT COMPARED TO 2002. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY HAS ALSO BEEN ON THE RISE. IN 2007, ABOUT 0.8 BILLION RINGGIT WAS SPENT BY M.S.C. MALAYSIA STATUS COMPANIES ON R&D, MORE THAN THREE TIMES THE AMOUNT SPENT IN 2002.

29. THE PRESENCE OF MANY GLOBAL MULTI-NATIONAL COMPANIES IN MALAYSIA HAS CREATED AN ECOSYSTEM THAT HAS HELPED TO ACCELERATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL I.C.T. CONTENT AND SOLUTIONS PROVIDERS. A NUMBER OF MALAYSIAN COMPANIES HAVE DEMONSTRATED THEIR CAPABILITIES IN PRODUCING WORLD-CLASS I.C.T. PRODUCTS AND SOLUTIONS, INCLUDING THAT OF CREATIVE AND MOBILE CONTENT.

30. THIS SUCCESS HAS REINFORCED OUR COMMITMENT TO FURTHER NURTURE AND DEVELOP OUR I.C.T. INDUSTRY. GOING FORWARD, WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO FACILITATING MORE HOME-GROWN COMPANIES TO BE GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE, SO THAT WE MAY CONTINUE TO PROVIDE WORLD-CLASS I.C.T. SOLUTIONS FOR THE WORLD.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

31. I HAVE PROVIDED A SNAPSHOT VIEW OF HOW MALAYSIA IS UTILISING I.C.T. TO SUPPORT AND DRIVE ITS DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS. I HOPE THAT I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO INSPIRE SOME THOUGHTS WITHIN YOU AS YOU PREPARE FOR YOUR UPCOMING DISCUSSIONS AND DELIBERATIONS.

32. INDEED, I BELIEVE THIS GATHERING PROVIDES A GOOD OPPORTUNITY NOT ONLY TO UNDERSTAND MORE ABOUT THE GLOBAL ISSUES THAT RELATE TO I.C.T. AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIETY. IT IS ALSO AN OPPORTUNITY TO FORMULATE AN APPROPRIATE AND FORWARD-LOOKING RESPONSE TO THESE ISSUES.

33. SINCE THE LAST WORLD CONGRESS IN AUSTIN, THERE HAVE BEEN MANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TAKING PLACE IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY. TODAY, WE FACE GROWING CONCERNS ABOUT A RECESSION IN THE U.S., ONE THAT THREATENS TO AFFECT THE ENTIRE GLOBAL ECONOMY. FUEL PRICE HIKES, RISING PRICES AND GLOBAL FOOD SHORTAGES ARE OF GRAVE CONCERN TO US ALL.

34. GIVEN THE CURRENT GLOBAL ECONOMIC SCENARIO, I FEEL THAT IT IS PERHAPS THE MOST OPPORTUNE TIME TO PUT I.C.T. TO WORK IN HELPING TO OVERCOME SOME OF THE CHALLENGES THAT THE WORLD IS CURRENTLY FACING.

35. I AM HEARTENED TO SEE THAT I.C.T. HAS ALREADY BECOME AN INDISPENSIBLE TOOL FOR INFORMATION DISSEMINATION ON CLIMATIC CHANGES, WHICH IS ALSO AN ISSUE OF INCREASING GLOBAL CONCERN. ALONG THE SAME LINES, AS I MENTIONED IN THE RECENT M.S.C. MALAYSIA INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY PANEL MEETING, I BELIEVE THAT TECHNOLOGY-BASED APPLICATIONS WHICH COMBINE ADVANCES IN AGRICULTURE, BIOTECHNOLOGY AND I.C.T. CAN PROVIDE US WITH ANSWERS TO A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS IN THE GLOBAL FOOD PRODUCTION SITUATION.

36. ON MALAYSIA'S PART, WE HAVE, FOR A FEW YEARS NOW, BEEN WORKING ON I.C.T.-BASED SOLUTIONS TO SOLVE CERTAIN PROBLEMS AND BOTTLENECKS THAT WE FACE ALONG THE AGRICULTURAL SUPPLY-CHAIN. ONE SUCH SOLUTION IS A TECHNOLOGY THAT MAKES AVAILABLE REAL-TIME MARKET INFORMATION TO FARMERS, FISHERMAN AND SMALLHOLDERS THROUGH THE INTERNET. THIS HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN HELPING THEM RAISE THEIR PRODUCTIVITY AND REVENUE. SOON, WE WILL BE INTRODUCING A SOLUTION THAT UTILISES MALAYSIA'S SMARTCARD TECHNOLOGY TO BETTER MANAGE AND FACILITATE THE DISEMINATION OF SUBSIDIES TO AGRICULTURAL WORKERS.

37. THESE ARE JUST SOME OF THE WAYS THAT WE HAVE USED I.C.T. TO PROVIDE SOLUTIONS TO OUR PARTICULAR PROBLEMS IN THE AREA OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PRODUCTION. I AM CERTAIN THERE ARE MANY OTHER PROBLEMS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD THAT CAN SIMILARLY BE SOLVED THROUGH THE CREATIVE USE OF I.C.T.. IT IS THEREFORE VITAL THAT WE BEGIN TO FOCUS OUR ATTENTION ON THESE CRITICAL ISSUES AND WORK TOGETHER TO FIND SOLUTIONS; AND I AM SURE THAT W.C.I.T. 2008 CAN PROVIDE THE FERTILE GROUND FOR US TO COLLABORATE AND FIND SOME OF THOSE ANSWERS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

38. YOUR DISCUSSIONS OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS WILL HELP TO SHAPE AND DEFINE THE WAY WE ADOPT, DEVELOP AND HARNESS TECHNOLOGY IN THE COMING YEARS. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT UNDERTAKING AND I HAVE FULL CONFIDENCE THAT YOU WILL DO SO POSITIVELY AND RESPONSIBLY, FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL MANKIND.

39. TO ALL DELEGATES, I WISH YOU EVERY SUCCESS IN YOUR DELIBERATIONS. I URGE YOU TO SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND TO BUILD UPON THE IDEAS THAT WILL BE DISCUSSED IN THE FORTHCOMING SESSIONS. I HOPE THAT YOU MAY BRING BACK SOME OF THESE IDEAS AND IMPLEMENT THEM IN YOUR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS.

40. ON BEHALF OF THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR, WE LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING TOGETHER WITH YOU TOWARDS REALISING OUR SHARED VISION OF A MORE PRODUCTIVE AND EFFICIENT WORLD, WHERE SOCIETY IS POSITIVELY ENABLED, EMPOWERED AND ENRICHED BY I.C.T..

41. ON THAT NOTE, IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO DECLARE THE 16TH WORLD CONGRESS ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY OFFICIALLY OPEN.

THANK YOU.