

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE ASEAN INTEGRITY DIALOGUE 2008
AT MALAYSIAN INSTITUTE OF INTEGRITY, KUALA LUMPUR
21 APRIL 2008**

YB DATUK SERI DR. RAIS YATIM
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. SURIN PITSUWAN
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF ASEAN

TAN SRI MOHD SIDEK HAJI HASSAN
CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT AND
CHAIRMAN OF THE MALAYSIAN INSTITUTE OF INTEGRITY

EXCELLENCIES

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

1. IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO JOIN YOU TODAY FOR THE ASEAN INTEGRITY DIALOGUE 2008. LET ME TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO WELCOME AND THANK ALL SPEAKERS AND DELEGATES, PARTICULARLY FROM ASEAN MEMBER COUNTRIES, FOR COMMITTING YOUR TIME AND FOR SUPPORTING THIS EVENT.

2. ALLOW ME TO ALSO PERSONALLY THANK DR. SURIN PITSUWAN FOR JOINING US IN THIS DIALOGUE. MORE IMPORTANTLY, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK HIM FOR HIS SUPPORT AND PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO ADOPT THE INTEGRITY AGENDA AS AN IMPORTANT PILLAR FOR ASEAN.

3. INDEED, FOR MANY SOCIETIES, THE ENHANCEMENT OF ETHICS AND INTEGRITY POSES AN ENORMOUS CHALLENGE. THIS IS ESPECIALLY SO FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES THAT MUST PURSUE THIS OBJECTIVE ALONGSIDE THAT OF PROMOTING ROBUST ECONOMIC GROWTH. SADLY, IT IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR ETHICS AND INTEGRITY TO FALL ALONG THE WAYSIDE IN THE PURSUIT OF WEALTH. INDEED, SOME HAVE TRIED TO ARGUE THAT OCCASIONAL LAPSES IN ETHICS AND INTEGRITY ARE THE NECESSARY PRICE TO PAY FOR RAPID ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

4. ON MY PART, I BELIEVE THAT THE PURSUIT OF DEVELOPMENT AS WELL AS INTEGRITY DOES NOT HAVE TO BE A ZERO-SUM GAME. INDEED, THE NEW THINKING AMONGST ECONOMISTS IS THAT THE ADHERENCE TO GOOD GOVERNANCE ALMOST ALWAYS LEADS TO A MORE POSITIVE LONG-TERM OUTCOME. AS SUCH, INTEGRITY IS MORE THAN A WORTHY LONG-TERM INVESTMENT WE SHOULD ALL TAKE UP, ESPECIALLY FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

5. FOR THE PAST 40 YEARS, ASEAN HAS PROVIDED US WITH A GOOD PLATFORM FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION. GOING FORWARD, I HOPE TO SEE ASEAN MAKING ITS ACTIVITIES MORE AND MORE "PEOPLE CENTRED". WE NEED TO ENSURE THAT THE PROCESS OF PROMOTING REGIONAL COOPERATION WOULD ALSO INCLUDE PROGRAMMES THAT STRENGTHEN INTEGRITY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE. IF UNITY IN DIVERSITY SHAPES OUR ASEAN CHARTER, LET US MAKE ETHICS AND INTEGRITY OUR COMMON VALUES.

6. TO BE SURE, BUILDING A SOCIETY OF INDIVIDUALS WITH A HIGH DEGREE OF CHARACTER AND MORAL FORTITUDE IS NO EASY TASK. AFTER ALL, VALUES SUCH AS ETHICS AND INTEGRITY ARE INTANGIBLE. THEY CANNOT BE THE SUBJECT OF LEGISLATION, NOR CAN THEY BE LEGISLATIVELY ENFORCED. MOREOVER, ETHICS AND INTEGRITY CANNOT BE TAUGHT PER SE. THEY MUST EVOLVE WITHIN OUR OWN RELIGIOUS/CULTURAL SETTING AND VALUE SYSTEM, AS WELL AS IN THE WAY WE RELATE TO OTHERS IN SOCIETY.

7. ALL THIS MAKES THE PROMOTION OF ETHICS AND INTEGRITY DIFFICULT TO PURSUE. YET, THEY REMAIN TWO OF THE MOST CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES THAT FORM THE BAROMETER OF SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT, AND THUS, ARE OF CRITICAL CONCERN TO US ALL.

8. OVER THE NEXT TWO DAYS, I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU WILL BE DELIBERATING ON THE ISSUE OF HOW ASEAN AS A REGION CAN COOPERATE TO STRENGTHEN INTEGRITY IN OUR RESPECTIVE SOCIETIES. I BELIEVE THAT MALAYSIA'S RECENT EXPERIENCE IN THIS MATTER MAY BE INSTRUCTIVE AND USEFUL FOR OUR ASEAN NEIGHBOURS. AS I SEE IT, "STRENGTHENING INTEGRITY AND REINFORCING TRUST"— OUR THEME FOR THIS YEAR — CAPTURES THE SPIRIT OF MALAYSIA'S OWN ASPIRATIONS TO PROMOTE INTEGRITY AND COMBAT CORRUPTION IN THE COUNTRY.

9. THEREFORE, ALLOW ME TO HUMBLLY SHARE WITH YOU OUR EXPERIENCE, IN THE HOPE THAT IT MAY OFFER SOME INSIGHTS INTO HOW WE, AS INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES AND AS A REGION, MAY PUSH THIS AGENDA FURTHER FORWARD.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

10. WHEN I TOOK OVER AS PRIME MINISTER OF THIS COUNTRY, I PROMISED TO PURSUE GOOD GOVERNANCE AND FIGHT CORRUPTION. OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS, MY GOVERNMENT HAS VIGOROUSLY TAKEN UP A TWO-PRONGED STRATEGY OF PUNITIVE AND PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO FIGHT CORRUPTION. ON THE PREVENTIVE FRONT, WE HAVE DEVELOPED A "NATIONAL INTEGRITY PLAN" TO GUIDE OUR EFFORTS. WE HAVE ESTABLISHED THE "MALAYSIAN INTEGRITY INSTITUTE" TO EDUCATE AND ENCOURAGE OUR PEOPLE TO UPHOLD INTEGRITY AND EMBRACE NOBLE VALUES.

11. WE HAVE ALSO FOCUSED OUR EFFORTS ON IMPROVING PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY – CUTTING BUREAUCRACY AND RED TAPE – WITH THE AIM OF REDUCING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORRUPTION TO OCCUR. AMONG OTHER THINGS, WE ESTABLISHED "PEMUDAH", A SPECIAL TASKFORCE COMPRISING LEADING MEMBERS OF THE CIVIL SERVICE AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR, TO FACILITATE AND REDUCE THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE ENCOURAGED THE

PRIVATE SECTOR TO PRACTISE GOOD CORPORATE GOVERNANCE.

12. ON THE PUNITIVE SIDE, WE HAVE FOCUSED OUR ATTENTION ON PUNISHING THOSE THAT ENGAGE IN CORRUPT ACTIVITIES. THIS HAS BEEN AUGMENTED BY OUR EFFORTS TO RAISE THE CAPACITY, EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENCY (A.C.A.), POLICE FORCE AND JUDICIARY. I WOULD LIKE TO PARTICULARLY HIGHLIGHT THE VITAL ROLE OF THE MALAYSIAN ANTI-CORRUPTION ACADEMY (M.A.C.A.), WHICH I LAUNCHED LAST YEAR, IN EQUIPPING OUR ANTI-CORRUPTION OFFICERS WITH MODERN SKILLS AND THE LATEST TECHNIQUES FOR FIGHTING CORRUPTION. I AM PROUD TO SAY THAT M.A.C.A., WITH THE SUPPORT OF ASEAN COUNTRIES, THE O.E.C.D. AND ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, HAS BECOME A LEADING ANTI-CORRUPTION TRAINING CENTRE FOR THE REGION.

13. OUR TWO-PRONGED STRATEGY, COUPLED WITH EARNEST EFFORT, HAS TODAY YIELDED SOME POSITIVE RESULTS. FOR EXAMPLE, WITH GREATER AWARENESS, MORE MALAYSIANS ARE COMING FORWARD TO REPORT ACTS OF CORRUPTION. THIS HAS RESULTED IN A HIGHER NUMBER OF CORRUPTION-RELATED ARRESTS BEING MADE. INDEED, THE NUMBER OF ARRESTS HAS RISEN BY A STRONG 54 PER CENT OVER THE LAST SEVEN YEARS. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THROUGH BETTER INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION, A HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF THOSE ARRESTED ARE NOW BEING SUCCESSFULLY CONVICTED. THE CONVICTION RATE FOR CORRUPTION-RELATED ARRESTS LAST YEAR WAS 78 PER CENT, A RISE OF 28 PER CENT IN JUST 5 YEARS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

14. NONETHELESS, DESPITE OUR BEST EFFORTS, WE SEEM TO HAVE FALLEN SHORT OF PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS. CERTAINLY, TODAY'S CITIZENS ARE BETTER EDUCATED, MORE SOPHISTICATED IN THEIR THINKING, AND MORE OPEN AND CRITICAL IN VOICING THEIR DEMANDS. WHILE MALAYSIANS STRONGLY BELIEVED IN OUR ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENDA AS THE RIGHT WAY TO GO, THEY ALSO WANTED TO SEE MORE RAPID AND MORE DECISIVE ACTION BEING TAKEN.

15. AS SUCH, WE HAVE DONE SOME WORK TO GATHER PUBLIC FEEDBACK ON OUR FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION. SO FAR, INITIAL FEEDBACK SUGGESTS THAT THE PUBLIC'S FRUSTRATION WITH THE SITUATION STEMS FROM THREE MAIN SOURCES. FIRSTLY, PEOPLE FEEL THAT THE INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANTI-CORRUPTION REMAINS STRUCTURALLY WEAK, AND THEREFORE PRONE TO ABUSES. THEY POINT TO THE NEED FOR A CLEAR SEPARATION OF POWERS BETWEEN THE INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS A HIGHER DEGREE OF TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY FROM ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES.

16. SECONDLY, THE PERCEPTION IS THAT ANTI-CORRUPTION ENFORCEMENT IS SLOW AND INCONSISTENT. SOME SAY THAT SO-CALLED "BIG FISH" ARE PROTECTED, WHILE THE "SMALL FRY" FACE THE FULL BRUNT OF THE LAW. WHISTLEBLOWERS ARE ALSO SAID TO BE INADEQUATELY PROTECTED. IN FACT, THE PERCEPTION GOES SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES OFTEN GO AFTER THE WHISTLEBLOWER INSTEAD OF FOCUSING ON INVESTIGATING THE ACTUAL CHARGES.

17. THIRDLY, MANY PEOPLE FEEL THAT THE EXISTING PUBLIC PROCUREMENT SYSTEM AND PROCEDURES FOR AWARDING GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS ARE RIFE WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORRUPTION.

18. CERTAINLY, BATTLING CORRUPTION IS A LONG AND ARDUOUS PROCESS, FRAUGHT WITH CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES. NONETHELESS, I WOULD LIKE TO REITERATE MY GOVERNMENT'S AND MY OWN PERSONAL RESOLVE TO CONTINUE THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION, AND TO DEVOTE THE NECESSARY RESOURCES REQUIRED TO SUPPORT THAT FIGHT.

19. AS SUCH, MOVING FORWARD, I WOULD LIKE TO ANNOUNCE FOUR KEY REFORM INITIATIVES THAT DIRECTLY ADDRESS PUBLIC CONCERNS REGARDING ANTI-CORRUPTION INCLUDING, ANTI-CORRUPTION INSTITUTIONS, ENFORCEMENT, LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND PUBLIC PROCUREMENT.

20. FIRSTLY, I WOULD LIKE TO ANNOUNCE THAT MY GOVERNMENT WILL RESTRUCTURE THE ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENCY (A.C.A.) MALAYSIA TO BECOME A FULL-FLEDGED "MALAYSIAN COMMISSION ON ANTI-CORRUPTION".

21. TO ENHANCE ITS EFFECTIVENESS, TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY, THE NEW COMMISSION'S STRUCTURE WILL BE SET UP TO INCLUDE A SYSTEM OF EFFECTIVE CHECKS AND BALANCES.

22. A KEY ELEMENT OF THIS SYSTEM WILL BE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT "CORRUPTION PREVENTION ADVISORY BOARD". THE BOARD WILL CONSIST OF PROMINENT, UPSTANDING MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY APPOINTED BY D.Y.M.M. SERI PADUKA BAGINDA YANG DIPERTUAN AGONG ON THE ADVICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER. BOARD MEMBERS WILL ADVISE THE COMMISSION ON ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATIONAL MATTERS. THE BOARD WILL ALSO BE BRIEFED ON CASES THAT INVOLVE PUBLIC INTEREST AND CONSEQUENTLY, CAN ENQUIRE OR RECOMMEND THAT CERTAIN MEASURES BE UNDERTAKEN. MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE BOARD WILL ACT TO ASSURE THE PUBLIC THAT THESE PUBLIC INTEREST CASES ARE BEING DEALT WITH APPROPRIATELY AND ADEQUATELY.

23. AT THE SAME TIME, A "PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON THE PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION" WILL BE ESTABLISHED. THE COMMISSION WILL TABLE ITS ANNUAL REPORT TO THIS PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE, IN WHICH MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE CAN SEEK FURTHER CLARIFICATION AND EXPLANATION ON THE CONTENTS OF THE REPORT. THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE THUS FORMS ANOTHER CHANNEL FOR ENSURING A HIGH DEGREE OF TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY. THE SPECIFIC MECHANICS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE PROPOSED COMMISSION ARE CURRENTLY BEING DETAILED OUT BY THE A.C.A., AND WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN DUE COURSE.

24. I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT, GIVEN THE WEIGHT AND IMPORTANCE OF ITS WORK, THE A.C.A. MUST BE GIVEN FREEDOM TO CARRY OUT ITS RESPONSIBILITIES. IN FACT, ONE OF THE FIRST PRONOUNCEMENTS I MADE ON ANTI-CORRUPTION WAS TO DIRECT THE A.C.A. TO CARRY OUT ITS DUTIES "WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR". I REMAIN TRUE TO THIS CONVICTION AND HAVE NEVER INTERFERED WITH THE WORK OF THE A.C.A.. IT IS MY FERVENT HOPE THAT BY RESTRUCTURING THE A.C.A., ITS EFFECTIVENESS, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY WILL BE CONSIDERABLY RAISED, WHILE PUBLIC TRUST IN ITS INTEGRITY AND INDEPENDENCE WILL BE QUICKLY RENEWED.

25. SECONDLY, TO BOOST THE ANTI-CORRUPTION ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THE CAPACITY OF THE NEW COMMISSION BE ENHANCED. THEREFORE, I WOULD LIKE TO ANNOUNCE THAT OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS, WE WILL MORE THAN TRIPLE THE SIZE OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION FORCE, ADDING A FURTHER 5,000 OFFICERS TO THE CURRENT TOTAL OF JUST UNDER 2,000 OFFICERS. IN ADDITION, THE COMMISSION WILL HAVE NEW TERMS OF SERVICE AND REMUNERATION IN ORDER TO ATTRACT TALENTED AND DEDICATED INDIVIDUALS TO JOIN THE FORCE. THE COMMISSION WILL BE GIVEN THE POWER TO HIRE AND FIRE, AND APPOINTMENTS WILL BE MADE BASED ON A COMPREHENSIVE SELECTION PROCESS. THROUGH THESE CHANGES, WE HOPE TO BOLSTER ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS AND TAKE THE NEW COMMISSION UP TO THE NEXT LEVEL, TO BE AT PAR WITH THE BEST IN THE WORLD.

26. THE THIRD INITIATIVE THAT MY GOVERNMENT IS UNDERTAKING IS THE INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE PROTECTION FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS AND WITNESSES. IT IS OUR HOPE THAT WITH BETTER PROTECTION, MORE PEOPLE WILL COME FORWARD TO REPORT CORRUPTION, THEREBY ALLOWING JUSTICE TO RUN ITS COURSE.

27. LAST BUT NOT LEAST, MY GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE IMMEDIATE STEPS TO IMPROVE THE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PROCESS THROUGH MEASURES THAT TARGET AND ADDRESS SPECIFIC PROBLEM AREAS IN THE SYSTEM. I HAVE DIRECTED THE CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT TO WORK TOGETHER WITH THE "PEMUDAH" TEAM TO FORMULATE A FRAMEWORK TO IMPROVE THE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT PROCESS, MAKING IT MORE TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE. BY VIRTUE OF ITS PUBLIC-PRIVATE MEMBERSHIP AND ITS MANDATE TO FACILITATE BUSINESS, I BELIEVE PEMUDAH IS THE IDEAL VEHICLE TO ENSURE POSITIVE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT SYSTEM.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

28. LET THERE BE NO DOUBT THAT MY GOVERNMENT IS STRONGLY COMMITTED TO STAMPING OUT CORRUPTION. LET THERE BE NO DOUBT THAT WE ARE COMMITTED TO RENEWING PUBLIC TRUST IN OUR COUNTRY'S NATIONAL INTEGRITY SYSTEM AND INSTITUTIONS. INDEED, WE WILL ENSURE THAT THE FOUR KEY ANTI-CORRUPTION INITIATIVES JUST ANNOUNCED WILL BE GIVEN FULL PRIORITY IN THE IMMEDIATE TERM.

29. AS SUCH, I WOULD LIKE TO SEE ALL THESE INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED QUICKLY, BEFORE THE YEAR-END AT THE VERY LATEST. I RECOGNISE THE CHALLENGE AND COMPLEXITY OF THIS UNDERTAKING – THEY INVOLVE CHANGES IN THE LAW AND PROCESSES, AS WELL AS IN HUMAN RESOURCE IMPROVEMENTS. NONETHELESS, THIS IS A MATTER THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED IMMEDIATELY, SO THAT WE MAY CONTINUE TO SERVE THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLE. TO ALL MALAYSIANS, I HOPE THAT I MAY HAVE YOUR SUPPORT TO DO WHAT IS REQUIRED.

30. TO OUR ASEAN FRIENDS, I HOPE THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH SOME USEFUL INSIGHTS. ABOVE ALL, I HOPE I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO HIGHLIGHT TO YOU THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS AND COMPLEXITIES INVOLVED IN SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTING AN INTEGRITY AND ANTI-CORRUPTION AGENDA, AT LEAST AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL. I CANNOT STRESS ENOUGH THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT FOR INTEGRITY TO TAKE ROOT AND TO FLOURISH.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

31. AS A MEMBER OF ASEAN, MALAYSIA WISHES TO URGE ALL MEMBERS TO COME TOGETHER TO SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN INTEGRITY. LET US CREATE A MORE JUST AND EQUITABLE WORLD, WHERE THE WEAK ARE PROTECTED AND THE MAJORITY GUIDED ONTO A PATH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. LET US BUILD AN ASEAN THAT IS ROBUST AND COMPETITIVE, PRACTISING GOOD GOVERNANCE AND UPHOLDING ETHICS AND INTEGRITY.

32. TO ALL DELEGATES, I WISH YOU EVERY SUCCESS IN YOUR DELIBERATIONS. I URGE YOU TO SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE AND 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. IN THIS WAY, WE MAY WORK REALISE A DYNAMIC ASEAN THAT MOVES EVER FORWARDS, NOT ONLY AS VIBRANT ECONOMIES, BUT ALSO AS SOCIETIES COMMITTED TO INTEGRITY AND JUST VALUES.

THANK YOU.