

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT MALAYSIAN MANUFACTURERS (F.M.M.) 40TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER
AT KUALA LUMPUR CONVENTION CENTRE
27 NOVEMBER 2008**

BISMILLAHIR RAHMANIR RAHIM
ASSALAMUALAIKUM WARAHMATULLAHI WABARAKATUH AND GOOD EVENING

YB TAN SRI MUHYIDDIN BIN MOHD YASSIN
MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Y.BHG. TAN SRI YONG POH KON
PRESIDENT, FEDERATION OF MALAYSIAN MANUFACTURERS

EXCELLENCIES AND DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

1. LET ME FIRST THANK THE FEDERATION OF MALAYSIAN MANUFACTURERS (F.M.M.) FOR INVITING ME TO ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER. I AM PLEASED TO BE HERE THIS EVENING, TO SHARE IN THE CELEBRATIONS AND TO ACKNOWLEDGE F.M.M.'S CONTRIBUTION TO OUR NATION THROUGHOUT THE YEARS.

2. INDEED, MALAYSIA HAS BEEN BLESSED WITH STRONG PARTNERSHIP AND ACTIVE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT SECTORS IN THE COUNTRY. I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING AMONGST THE KEY STAKEHOLDERS ARE CRITICAL ELEMENTS IN DETERMINING THE GROWTH PROSPECTS OF THE MALAYSIAN ECONOMY – ESPECIALLY IN TODAY'S CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT IS PROJECTING THAT THE NATIONAL ECONOMY WILL ACHIEVE A GROWTH RATE OF 5 PERCENT IN 2008 AND 3.5 PERCENT IN 2009, WE MUST BE AWARE THAT THERE ARE SERIOUS RISKS AND EXTREME VOLATILITY IN THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT THAT CAN DERAIL OUR PLANS.

3. CERTAINLY, THIS IS A TIME WHEN ALL STAKEHOLDERS MUST PERSEVERE AND WORK TOGETHER TO OVERCOME ECONOMIC CHALLENGES; TO CORRECT STRUCTURAL WEAKNESSES; AND TO ENHANCE NATIONAL UNITY, SO THAT MALAYSIA WILL REMAIN ON TRACK TO ATTAIN ITS DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS. BY WORKING TOGETHER, I AM CONFIDENT THAT WE WILL EMERGE AS A STRONGER TRADING NATION – WITH GREATER COMPETITIVENESS – THROUGH BETTER VALUE-ADDED AND HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY LEVELS. THUS, IT IS IMPERATIVE FOR ALL OF THE NATION'S STAKEHOLDERS TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER TO ENSURE THAT EVERYONE PREVAILS AND COMES OUT STRONGER FROM THE CURRENT GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS.

4. ONE KEY CHALLENGE IS TO STRENGTHEN OVERALL CONFIDENCE IN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREAS OF INVESTMENTS, TRADE AND CONSUMPTION. FOR INSTANCE, THE GOVERNMENT, ON ITS PART, IS COMMITTED TO ADDRESS ANY STRUCTURAL WEAKNESSES IN THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK AND PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY SYSTEM. IN THIS

REGARD, THE SPECIAL TASKFORCE TO FACILITATE BUSINESS – MORE POPULARLY KNOWN AS “PEMUDAH” – WAS ESTABLISHED TO LOOK INTO CRITICAL AREAS IN NEED OF IMPROVEMENT. IN ADDITION, OTHER MEASURES – INCLUDING A 7 BILLION RINGGIT STIMULUS PACKAGE RECENTLY INTRODUCED – HAVE BEEN PUT IN PLACE TO ENHANCE THE COUNTRY’S RESILIENCE AND ENCOURAGE GREATER DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION.

5. ON NOVEMBER 14TH, THE MINISTRY OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INDUSTRY HAD ALSO ANNOUNCED AN ADDITIONAL PACKAGE OF MEASURES, INCLUDING: FULLY EXEMPTING IMPORT DUTY ON RAW MATERIALS AND INTERMEDIATE GOODS FOR DOMESTIC MANUFACTURING; EXTENDING THE APPROVAL FOR THE OPERATION OF REPRESENTATIVE AND/OR REGIONAL OFFICES TO FIVE YEARS; ESTABLISHING DEDICATED F.T.A. UNITS TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ADVICE ON FULLY UTILISING THE BENEFITS OF REGIONAL AND BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENTS; AND, CONDUCTING TARGETED INVESTMENT AND SPECIALISED TRADE PROMOTION ACTIVITIES.

6. IN ADDITION, THE GOVERNMENT WILL FURTHER LIBERALISE MANUFACTURING-RELATED SERVICES IN-LINE WITH ASEAN’S INITIATIVES. FOR INSTANCE, THESE INCLUDE RELAXING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION CENTRES AND INTERNATIONAL PROCUREMENT CENTRES. THERE ARE ALSO ABUNDANT OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENTS AND TRADE IN OTHER SERVICES, SUCH AS IN THE CONSTRUCTION, HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES SUB-SECTORS. IN THIS REGARD, I WOULD LIKE TO URGE ALL MALAYSIAN BUSINESSES TO FULLY UTILISE EXISTING ASEAN F.T.A.’S TO EXPAND THEIR TRADE WITH PARTNER COUNTRIES.

7. GOING FORWARD, I HOPE THAT MALAYSIAN BUSINESSES WILL CONTINUE TO DEMONSTRATE A HIGH LEVEL OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT BY BEING MORE AGGRESSIVE IN EXPANDING THEIR MARKETS, INCLUDING BY CREATING NEW MARKETS FOR NEW PRODUCTS AND TECHNOLOGIES. I BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE AMPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MALAYSIAN BUSINESSES TO FILL IN ANY GAPS SIMPLY BY BEING MORE CREATIVE.

8. FOR EXAMPLE, DURING MY RECENT VISIT TO UZBEKISTAN, I SAW MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR MALAYSIAN BUSINESSES TO WORK WITH THEIR UZBEK COUNTERPARTS. IN THIS RESPECT, UZBEKISTAN CAN ACT AS A HUB TO THE CENTRAL ASIAN MARKET, AND IN RETURN, UZBEKISTAN COULD USE MALAYSIA AS THE GATEWAY INTO THE ASEAN MARKET. I AM PLEASED TO NOTE THAT MALAYSIA AND UZBEKISTAN INTEND TO EXPLORE MANY UNTAPPED AREAS, SUCH AS AGRICULTURE AND AGRO-BASED INDUSTRIES, TO PRODUCE PRODUCTS FOR LOCAL CONSUMPTION IN BOTH COUNTRIES, AS WELL AS FOR EXPORT. MOREOVER, MALAYSIA AND UZBEKISTAN CAN MEANINGFULLY COOPERATE TO DEVELOP HALAL HUBS AND TO PROMOTE THEIR RESPECTIVE LOCAL TOURISM INDUSTRIES.

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9. IT IS CLEAR THAT WHEN ALL STAKEHOLDERS PLAY THEIR RESPECTIVE ROLES WELL AND CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THE PROCESS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, THE CUMULATIVE EFFECTS ARE INDEED TREMENDOUS AND CAN PROPEL THE MALAYSIAN BUSINESS SECTOR INTO A HIGHER LEVEL OF INDUSTRIALISATION. IN THIS REGARD, I WOULD LIKE TO COMMEND THE F.M.M. FOR HAVING FULFILLED ITS RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE MALAYSIAN MANUFACTURING AND INDUSTRIAL

SECTORS IN A DILIGENT AND EFFECTIVE MANNER, DURING THESE PAST 40 YEARS.

10. IN MY VIEW, THE F.M.M. CAN STAND PROUD AS IT HAS ACHIEVED MANY SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES AT THE NATIONAL AS WELL AS INTERNATIONAL LEVELS. I AM MADE TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE MOST RECENT ACHIEVEMENT IS THE F.M.M'S SUCCESSFUL BID FOR MALAYSIA TO HOST THE 6TH WORLD CHAMBERS CONGRESS IN JUNE 2009.

11. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO RE-ITERATE THAT THE F.M.M. HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN IMPORTANT DIALOGUE PARTNER FOR THE GOVERNMENT, AND FOR MULTI-NATIONAL CORPORATIONS AND AGENCIES AS WELL. IN THIS RESPECT, THE GOVERNMENT EXPECTS TO CONTINUE TO RECEIVE THE F.M.M'S INPUT AND PROPOSALS FOR MANY YEARS TO COME. FOR THAT, I EXTEND MY SINCERE GRATITUDE.

12. I HAVE ALSO BEEN MADE TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE F.M.M. WILL BE WELCOMING ITS NEW 8TH PRESIDENT, IN VIEW OF Y.BHG. TAN SRI YONG HAVING SERVED HIS FULL TENURE OF THREE CONSECUTIVE YEARS. I HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT THIS IS THE MAXIMUM PERIOD ALLOWED UNDER THE F.M.M'S MEMORANDUM AND ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION. WE LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING NEW IDEAS AND PERSPECTIVES FROM F.M.M., AS NEW INDUSTRY LEADERS EMERGE TO TAKE ON THE MANTLE AND CARRY ON THE EXCELLENT WORK OF THEIR PREDECESSORS.

13. LASTLY, TONIGHT'S PROGRAM INCLUDES THE PRESENTATION OF LONG-SERVICE AWARDS TO ITS COUNCIL AND BRANCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS, WHO HAVE BEEN THE FEDERATION'S STALWARTS THESE PAST 40 YEARS. TO THE RECIPIENTS, I EXTEND MY HEARTFELT CONGRATULATIONS.

14. IN THE YEARS TO COME, I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE F.M.M. WILL CONTINUE TO BE A DYNAMIC ORGANISATION AND AN IMPORTANT FOCAL POINT FOR THE MALAYSIAN MANUFACTURING SECTOR. I WISH YOU THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF SUCCESS IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVOURS.

THANK YOU.