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Title : **10TH ASEAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY MINISTERS MEETING (TELMIN-10)**

1. I am honoured to welcome you to Kuala Lumpur and to the 10th ASEAN TELMIN. It is indeed a privilege to address this distinguished gathering of the ASEAN Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministers and senior officials as well as our ASEAN Dialogue partners alongside so many members of the ICT community. This conference comes at a robust and exciting time in terms of industry expansion and growth in our region and I congratulate all present on your achievements in the last decade in developing the telecommunications and ICT sector.

2. Today more than 78% of our citizens in ASEAN are using ICT in different facets of their lives. The sector employs approximately 11.7 million people and generates more than 3% of our gross domestic product.

3. In the last decade, mobile penetration for the region grew from an average of 4.3% in 2000 to more than 76% by the end of 2009 and continues to grow. In fact, 5 ASEAN countries have mobile penetration levels that have exceeded the 100% mark with others fast catching up. Remarkably, this spectacular growth occurred in the same period when we had the Asian Financial crisis where economies contracted and prudence and frugality were became the order of the day.

4. Yet, despite the challenges faced in the last decade, the telecommunications and ICT sectors continued to grow. I believe this leaves little doubt that telecommunications have ceased to become a luxury, and is now a necessary tool of survival in the 21st Century. In fact telecommunications and ICT play a vital role as catalysts for sustainable economic development and growth. The empirical evidence is incontrovertible. Studies have shown that every 10% increase in broadband penetration boosts GDP by an average of 1.3%, and every 10% increase in mobile tele-density results in a 0.7% increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a nation.

5. Indeed, it has been our experience in Malaysia that telecommunications and ICT have served as the primary enabler for our economic development and growth in the last decade. Telecommunications and ICT connected us to the mainstream of global development and today communications and multimedia touches every industry sector in our economy.

6. In the last decade, we have seen a number of major changes to our ICT landscape. Policy reforms introduced this sector to privatization and we encouraged the progressive liberalization of services for the telecommunications and broadcasting sectors. We enacted the world's first convergent legislation and established the first converged industry developer and regulator for the communications and multimedia sector.

7. Because of these bold steps we took, today Malaysia's ICT landscape is enriched with many service providers and numerous communications and ICT services. I am also pleased to

share that our broadband penetration today is 55.6% surpassing our original target of 50% by the end of last year. I am particularly proud that when I set the target in July of 2007 in my capacity then as Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on National high Speed Broadband, our penetration rate at that time was hovering at 12.8%. But I firmly believed that if all stakeholders put in a concerted effort we could make that giant leap-frog forward, and Alhamdulillah, not only have we met our target in a timely manner, but we have in fact surpassed it.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

8. Having said that, I must quickly add that a mere increase in broadband penetration or cellular density in itself will not guarantee economic growth and an improved well-being for our people. These advancements in communications infrastructure must be coupled with real and concrete applications which will increase productivity and economic output. New ways of providing applications and services should be explored and initiated across all sectors of the economy.

9. This is important to note for any country seeking to accelerate their economic growth. This is why in Malaysia, in our New Economic Model, specific planning in this regard has been well incorporated. The New Economic Model together with continuous improvements in the communications and ICT infrastructure seeks to transform the Malaysian economy into one with high income and quality growth over the next decade with knowledge and innovation as our key elements. We have a bold exciting Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) and have identified National Key Economic Areas (NKEA), which is the culmination of a substantial body of work to transform Malaysia into a high-income economy by 2020.

10. In our 10th Malaysia Plan, we target to achieve an average of 6% annual real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth through year 2015; driven primarily by the services sector where growth is expected to average 7.2%. This plan clearly articulates the central role of ICT as the bedrock for the nation to vault forward to a high-income economy. The quantum leap in the plan will see the ICT sector expand from being a vertical sector to include the horizontal as well, as it cuts across all spheres of the economy and the lives of all Malaysians.

11. By the same token, I am certain ASEAN Member Countries are making changes within their own system to further include ICT integration to transform their respective economies. Several years ago, we have already identified ICT as one of the ASEAN Economic Pillars. ICT has a huge multiplier effect for economic growth as it has the potential to make supply chains more efficient, collaboration richer, financial transactions faster, pricing more dynamic and processes transparent. ICT can accelerate the flow of goods and services across national borders, underpinned by effective competition; ICT stimulates and improves trade by connecting people and places previously not connected.

Ladies and gentlemen,

12. One of the best examples on how the new emerging structure of the ICT industry is evolving can be seen with the rise of social networking and the Web 2.0 environment. Web 2.0 solutions empower individuals to utilize the Internet for global collaboration, innovation and information sharing. Not only has it empowered and changed the lives of individuals, the

Web 2.0 world has spawned new business models and altered the way goods are sold, content is provided, and value is created.

13. This is why it is imperative for ASEAN to be in the mainstream of global ICT development. Unfortunately, for many of us, inter ASEAN connectivity still remains a challenge as rolling out ubiquitous modern broadband networks requires huge investments. Much of our connectivity still routes to the US and Europe before reaching a fellow ASEAN country. To remedy this, I propose that TELMIN should consider focusing resources on improving pan ASEAN connectivity in order to lower the cost of bandwidth in ASEAN. If we are able to accomplish this, inter ASEAN connectivity will be greatly improved as will opportunities for enhancing ASEAN originated content and value creation for ASEAN products and services.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

14. In our earnest drive to develop our respective economies, we also must not forget the new challenges brought about by advancements in ICT. Cyber-criminals are getting more sophisticated and pose great risks to any country or government. Steps must be taken to improve our capacity in dealing with cyber-threats and cyber criminals or else they will cause irreparable damage to economies and countries. We need to step up our capacity building to ensure that governments and law enforcement officials remain ahead of existing cyber threats, and on the pulse of emerging ones.

15. Simultaneously, we must also look into the ethics of internet use, to the extent that the internet is governable. Obviously the internet by its very nature renders it almost impossible to completely regulate. However irresponsible and unethical behavior in the borderless world of the Internet must somehow be managed. The public and our future generations need to be educated to use communications and ICT in a safe and responsible manner. We have seen how societal values are sometimes negatively impacted due to the rapid advancement of ICT. Indecency and anarchy can seep in into any environment is not anchored on ethical value. In this regard, our Eastern cultural and societal values can come into play. I strongly believe, in embracing developments in ICT it is important we do not forget our cultural roots and our values. Our culture and our heritage is what makes us unique and it is important that we educate our peoples never to abandon what makes them uniquely Asian, even when faced with the onslaught of modernity and globalization. We should never, in the name of development, compromise on our values.

16. Our children and the future generation of ASEANS should retain their ASEAN cultural values and they must be protected from the threats on the Internet. I understand some of these issues are also at the forefront of recent TELMIN discussions and I urge you to develop a cohesive and comprehensive plan for us to work together to protect our peoples as much as possible from the negative elements roaming and hiding in the darker realms of cyberspace.

Ladies and gentlemen,

17. I feel it is most timely and appropriate that this meeting has chosen the theme “ICT: Positioning ASEAN For The Future”, as it complements the important role we have to play on the road of achieving an ASEAN Community by 2015. Our tasks in the years ahead are more challenging as we have to work harder conscientiously to transform ASEAN into a

region that is attractive enough to draw investments and trade into the region which will consequently uplift the quality of life for the people of ASEAN. ASEAN cannot afford not to be on the cusp of ICT development if it is to remain as the most attractive region for business and commerce for the world. If this is to be the Asian Century, then ASEAN must serve as a primary artery for trade and investment in the continent.

18. It is also heartening to note that the 10th ASEAN Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministers Meeting today will also adopt the ASEAN ICT Masterplan with the vision “Towards an Empowering and Transformational ICT: Creating an Inclusive, Vibrant and Integrated ASEAN”. ICT is probably the most fundamental tool we have at our disposal to further strengthen our grouping by facilitating communications, for the exchange of ideas and to strengthen bilateral as well as people to people relations between all member countries. I hope all TELMIN members will give their full commitment in translating the Masterplan into concrete initiatives that will fulfill the intended objectives.

19. ASEAN has achieved much since its inception over four decades ago. But it must continuously change and adapt itself to changing times if it is to remain an effective and relevant grouping, bringing real benefits to its member countries and partners. Whether in ICT or in other areas where member countries work closely together, we must continue to strive to become the best regional grouping in terms of the value it brings to the people of ASEAN. We have done well, but there is always room for improvement and we must be committed towards taking ASEAN to the next level.

20. As this is the 10th Anniversary of ASEAN Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministers Meeting, I believe there is much to be discussed and shared. I hope that besides the formal talks in rolling out the Masterplan for the future of ASEAN ICT, all of you here will take the opportunity to strengthen your network of friends and build on that camaraderie to facilitate future cooperation.

21. I also hope that all delegates of TELMIN-10 would take some time to enjoy the sights and sounds of Kuala Lumpur and experience the warmth of Malaysian hospitality. Above all I hope you have a fruitful and beneficial conference, and I wish you well in your deliberations. With that, it is with great pleasure that I declare the 10th ASEAN Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministers Meeting open.

Thank you.