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*"GLOBALISATION AND LIBERALIZATION CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITES FOR CORPORATE PROFESSIONALS"*

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Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the organizers for being so gracious in inviting me to this august gathering this morning. I would like to congratulate you for choosing the theme "Globalization and Liberalizations – Challenges and Opportunities". It is a theme that has been much debated and written by scholars, academicians, politicians, and others. This is because it affects all of us in one way or the other in our daily lives either directly or indirectly.

2. Indeed these are the new paradigms of the globalized society that we need to make adjustments to, so as to avoid adverse impact on us. Furthermore, the tragedy of September 11, and the ensuing fight against international terrorism are the new dynamics in international relations that have to be taken into account.

3. Malaysia as a country has long practiced an open liberal economic policies. As the world's 18th largest trading nation we have long ago been globalized. Our involvement in the debate regarding globalization is not because we are against this process but is in order to correct the negative effects that can result on the economies of the developing countries. The reality is that the developed countries gained much more which further aggravates the divide between the rich and poor countries. Malaysia wants to see a more fair and just world, where both the developed and the developing countries would receive the benefits from increased trade and economic development. The world is still struggling to resolve the problems of poverty, and the debt burden continues to trouble developing countries. Our voice has been loud and clear in championing the cause for social and economic justice.

4. Hitherto we are in agreement that post September 11, the world had experienced tremendous transformation. Our conduct of domestic as well as international affairs have therefore to take cognizance of these new challenges. While facing these challenges we should not be disillusioned but should also look at opportunities that can result from it.

5. What is very clear is that even the planning and execution of domestic policies have to take into account international development. In trade we have to adhere to the WTO, to other regional or sub-regional organizations due to our membership in them. It is thus important to understand that in this unipolar world and with the advancement of technology and communication, liberal democracy and free trade, national sovereignty itself is no longer in the exclusive jurisdiction of nation states.

6. The holding of this conference indeed is relevant and necessary for you as practitioners in order to update and enhance your knowledge and skills. Besides, it would also enable you to interact with regulators and fellow professionals which is an important element in the performance of your tasks. We should always realize that just as our country becomes more developed, our skills and knowledge must go along with it. Corporate professionals based on your specialization must move forward and continually update yourselves in order to provide sound and proper advice to your clients.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. Let me also say, globalization is not a new phenomenon. Some experts have even suggested that the world economy was just as globalized 100 years ago as it is today. However, today, globalization through free trade, reduction of tariff barriers is accelerated because of rapid technological advancements.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

8. While the process of globalization itself may not be considered new, the breadth and depth of the process as we are currently experiencing is unprecedented. This has deep implications for society at all strata, be they political, social, economic or cultural. As a result, at the national level, governments, business and society in general have to reorient and adapt themselves to changes. At the international level, states, international organizations and multinational corporations have had to do the same. In this connection, there is an increasing realization that a world defined by the process of globalization requires a new form of global governance, based on the notions of equity, fairness and justice.

9. Many have said that there is something inevitable about globalization. While the process of globalization itself may be inevitable, it cannot however be said that its outcome is inevitable. In this regard, I am of the view that decision makers, including corporate professionals, have an important role to play in ensuring that globalization is managed in such a way that it would result in a more equitable

sharing of its benefits. Certainly, in a world that is integrated in a way never before seen, it is inconceivable that there exists a latter day class system on a global scale, with the rich and powerful growing increasingly wealthy and the poor and destitute becoming increasingly marginalized. The fight against underdevelopment, disease and poverty must continue and all of us, including those in the corporate sector must join together to overcome these challenges.

10. Malaysia has to respond to the challenges and seize the opportunities brought about by globalization. In this regard, the government has formulated policies to stimulate economic growth based on the new challenges facing us. Clearly, the economic policies adopted by the government must allow us to compete effectively at the regional and international level in order to ensure sustainable growth and economic development of the country. This is consistent with our objective to be a developed nation by the year 2020.

11. We should therefore tap expertise and technical know-how from the larger markets open to us around the world. This also means we could have access to more foreign capital flows and investments, technology and imports and the larger export markets.

12. By inviting foreign investment to our country, we are able to increase employment opportunities and provide for greater technology transfer. This is pertinent in order to propel our economic growth and improve the living standards of our people.

13. Globalization would also allow foreign transnational corporations access to our markets. We would be vulnerable and open to both financial and economic assault, as experienced by us in the 1997-98 financial and economic crisis if we do not have our own domestic resilience. Where it is necessary we have to introduce measures that will protect us from detrimental and harmful activities penetrating from outside. For this reason, corporate surveillance in activities relating to financial and capital markets have been beefed up, corporate governance practices have been enhanced and further strengthened. Malaysia's corporations must be able to respond sensitively and react swiftly to the altered position in different market segments, in different parts of the world.

14. It is therefore important to understand what globalization and trade liberalization could offer and at the same time recognize their corresponding threats. This may require a new way of managing business and in analyzing the risks involved.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

15. Almost all of you present today are professionals. What is significant is how we should react to the era of constant change. We should not be stargazers or definitely not clairvoyants who can read the stars and charts to draw up a plan for the future with certainty and to forecast with accuracy. No one can guide us through our future

with exactitude because we cannot predict what will really happen in the future. What we can do is prepare our professionals to be able to face all eventualities and be well-equipped for what may come along our way. We cannot assume that we have the best knowledge and thus be complacent. We need to be alert to global changes. It is therefore imperative that we equip ourselves to better face this new phenomena with confidence and understanding.

16. As we have witnessed around the globe, corporate professionals are the driving force behind the successes and failures of corporations. We should adopt new measures to improve our skills and productivity while enhancing our professionalism in order to create competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

17. Since the turn of the century, the world economies have been undergoing many modifications and the tried and tested methods of getting things done in the past would not necessarily be sufficient. What we learnt in schools or universities and have employed them in our business thus far, may no longer be relevant or sufficient to guide us through the current unsettled world economies. You have to acquire new skills and enhance your professionalism in order to continue to serve your corporate clients efficiently, effectively and able to be competitive at the same time.

18. In this regard you must be able to assimilate the current needs and developments to sustain the profitability of your business. You have to be prudent in exercising your judgments whilst at the same time demonstrating a high skill of professionalism and entrepreneurship in managing them. Undoubtedly, corporate governance and professional etiquette is an important element to ensure success.

19. Today's world demands a high skill and proficiency in managing business. It requires hands-on management in the performance of your tasks and responsibilities. You need to demonstrate innovativeness to turn every obstacle into opportunity and opportunity to your advantage. In addition, you should acquire problem-solving and trouble-shooting skills and a sense of level-headedness in performing your functions.

20. Corporate professionals of the new millennium must be open and able to make adjustments that suit the business world. You must be prepared to embrace the latest management techniques and technology to compete internationally.

21. You must be certain that you understand the rules and regulations of your business, having knowledge on specific areas where your expertise are relied on, understanding the current trends and being able to interpret them correctly if it could have an impact on your client's business and the list is not exhaustive. To achieve all these, perseverance, consistency and hard work are required to meet the demands of your client and the corporate world.

22. In the world where knowledge is increasingly becoming the most expensive commodity, corporate professionals must be competent in acquiring, using and creating knowledge and turning this knowledge into value-added opportunities.

23. The recent spate of corporate scandals in the US itself has put a lot of strain on the integrity of professionals to carry out their responsibilities with honesty and integrity. What can be learned from these scandals is that, in the age of globalization, transnational corporation should equally be subject to scrutiny and good corporate governance. Corporations that do not practice corporate governance could affect the livelihood and economies in different parts of the world where they operate. Therefore, it is important for corporate professionals to learn from the successes of transnational corporations as well as from their failures and shortcomings. Learning, unlearning and relearning are therefore an integral aspect of professional competitiveness.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

24. Globalization and trade liberalization present us with threats and also rewards. Corporate professionals must face all these challenges in order to benefit from them.

25. Conferences such as this provide an ideal platform to share experiences, expand network and exchange ideas. Corporate professionals should embrace totally the idea of continuous education to ensure that you are able to keep pace with the rapidly changing business environment.

26. It is indeed heartening to see so many corporate professionals in this hall today. I am certain you are all here to learn and prepare yourselves to meet the challenges and opportunities. All of you I am sure are willing to learn and prepare yourselves to remain relevant and competitive.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

27. With that, I wish all of you, a very fruitful and invigorating conference and hope you leave today with new knowledge gained from the proceedings.

28. Once again, I thank MAICSA for inviting me to officiate the Conference and deliver the Keynote Address. I now would like to declare open the National Conference on "Company Secretaries Updates 2002".

Thank you.

