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Title : SPEECH AT THE LAUNCHING OF THE BOOK AND PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION "BETWEEN EDEN AND EARTH- GARDENS OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD" ORGANIZED BY YAYASAN AL-BUKHARY

YB Senator Datuk M. Kayveas
Deputy Minister of Housing and Local Government

Y.Bhg. Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar Al-Bukhary
Executive Chairman of Al-Bukhary Foundation

Tuan Syed Mohd. Al-Bukhary
Director of Islamic Arts Museum

Representatives of Malaysia Airlines and Airod Alenia Technology

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalamu'alaikom Warrahmatullahi Wabarokatuh,

Allow me at the outset to express my profound appreciation and thanks to the organizers, the Islamic Arts Museum, Kuala Lumpur, the Albukhary Foundation, Malaysia Airlines and Airod Alenia Technology for kindly inviting me to officially launch the book and photography exhibition "Between Eden and Earth-Gardens of the Islamic World". I am indeed happy to be associated with this noble event that seeks to promote the rich cultural heritage and tradition of Islam.

2. I would like to commend the organizers for the invaluable work that they have undertaken to disseminate information and promote awareness amongst members of the public on the ascent of Islam, its rich and diverse heritage as well as its contribution to humankind. This effort certainly contributes to a better understanding of the religion which has given rise and contributed to great and magnificent world's civilizations.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. The study of Islamic gardens and its architectural landscape is a vast field indeed. It encompasses not only mosques and palaces but also cities and forts, deserts and urban dwellings stretching across an expanse of three continents. It is fascinating to note that Islamic garden landscapes and their architecture throughout the world have acquired a regional identity, a stylistic evolution and a relevance to the eternal principles of Islam. Such is the influence of Islamic values on these garden landscapes that many adopted them quite unconsciously, regarding them as their

own. This is especially in countries which for a long period had been under Islamic influence and Muslim rule.

4. The exhibit, which is unique in its own ways, exposes this magnificent Islamic heritage by visual displays and information of the different types and concept of garden landscapes throughout the world. It projects the sumptuous design of the palace gardens such as the Alhambra in Granada in contrast to the private courtyard gardens of Syria and Egypt and the terraced levels of the Shalimar Bagh in Lahore. The concept of privacy was further developed in the terraced citadel gardens of Sana'a in Yemen, providing a high exterior to defend against intruders while encapsulating their precious gardens and farmlands on the interior. The Taj Mahal of India sets the aesthetic guidelines for the funerary mausoleum gardens whilst throughout the Islamic world the garden layout has maintained the Iranian chahar bagh or quadripartite division as the dominant features in its landscape design.

5. The exhibition interestingly also examines the garden as a reflection of the Quranic revelation, and how man had created it as a reminder of the paradise that he strives to be in the hereafter. This is because Gardens become a symbol of paradise (in the sense of the place where the righteous go after the death). Thus the Islamic gardens were conceived early in Islamic history as a place of great beauty and serenity, ideal for reflection and development of their own spirituality. At the same time the Islamic Gardens around the world, whether in Spain, Saudi Arabia, India or here in Malaysia have been meticulously and carefully adapted by blending and incorporating aspects of the local cultures and traditions without weakening the spiritual essence.

6. The exhibition "Between Eden and Earth-Gardens of the Islamic World" thus offers an intimate tour of the colourful array of breathtaking garden landscapes from the Iberian Peninsula of Spain and Morocco, moving eastward from Turkey towards India before setting us home in the gardens of Malaysia. I am indeed happy to note that the exhibition will offer our guests an opportunity to explore for themselves the own fountain garden of the Islamic Arts Museum.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. I hope the book and the visuals on some of the greatest historical gardens of the Islamic world would serve as invaluable resource materials for all those who are interested in the Islamic heritage of garden landscapes.

8. In this connection, I would like to congratulate the renowned architecture historian, Mr. Ovidio Guaita, for his contributions in promoting the cultural heritage of Islam. I am aware that this will be the second exhibition by the Islamic Arts Museum of the photographic works of Mr. Ovidio Guaita. The first exhibition entitled "The Art of Living in Residential Architecture of the Islamic World" was held in 2001 at the Islamic Arts Museum. The exhibition in 2001 featured the edifices of different geographical location inspired by Islamic values highlighting the attainment of harmony and enrichment of one's dwelling. I am told that the exhibition was

extended by popular public request making it one of the longest temporary exhibitions in Malaysia. Once again, I wish to extend my appreciation to Mr. Ovidio Guaita for his deep interest in matters relating to Islamic heritage. His efforts certainly contribute to a better understanding of Islam.

9. This exhibition would not have also been possible without the generosity of the organizers. I, therefore, like to pay tribute and extend my deep appreciation and thanks to the Islamic Art Museum, Kuala Lumpur, the Albukhary Foundation, Malaysia Airlines and Airod Alenia Technology for their contribution in this noble cause.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. On that note, I have great pleasure in launching the book and the photography exhibition "Between Eden and Earth-Gardens of the Islamic World."

Thank you