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**Title : WELCOMING REMARKS AT THE DIALOGUE SESSION WITH YAB
PM ON THE OCCASION OF THE HEADS OF MISSION CONFERENCE
(HOMC)**

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh,

A very good morning to everyone.

YAB Dato' Seri Abdullah Hj. Ahmad Badawi
Prime Minister of Malaysia,

YB Dato' Joseph Salang
Timbalan Menteri Luar,

YB Dato' Zainal Abidin Osman
Setiausaha Parlimen,

Saudara saudari sekalian,

At the outset, let me welcome all of you to this opening session of the Heads of Mission Conference (HOMC) held here at the Putrajaya Convention Centre (PCC) this morning.

This is the fifth Heads of Mission Conference held since 1991 and the first under the leadership of our new Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Abdullah Hj. Ahmad Badawi.

I must thank the honourable Prime Minister for being able to grace this occasion in spite of his very busy schedule. Your presence, Sir, will surely inspire and motivate our Ambassadors, High Commissioners, Consul-Generals and Consuls whom we have brought back from near and far.

As Dato' Seri is well aware, we have organized this conference for several reasons. The most important, of course, is to give the Heads of Mission the opportunity to listen and interact directly with the Prime Minister. Since this is the first time the conference is held under your leadership, our Heads of Mission, I am sure, are anxious to find out whether there is going to be any change in our foreign policy.

They are particularly eager to know your views and perspectives of the future directions of our foreign policy. They will also want to know first hand of your expectations of them as the nation's representatives. I am sure there will be a lot of questions asked of the Prime Minister later.

Since becoming Prime Minister, YAB Dato' Seri has on several occasions touched on Malaysia's foreign policy. Among them are in the speeches delivered at the Nikkei Conference on the Future of Asia held last June in Tokyo, the Second East Asia Congress and the Asia Pacific Roundtable which were also held in June this year. These speeches, I believe, underline to a large extent the policy directions as far as East Asia relations are concerned. There may be some questions on this aspect. And we look forward to hearing your views on other aspects of our foreign policy.

YAB Dato' Seri,

This year's conference, unlike previous ones, has been designed for the Heads of Mission to actively participate in the proceedings. They will participate either as paper presenters, discussants, panelists or moderators. At the same time, officers of Wisma Putra will also be participating in the same manner. Additionally, we have also invited outside experts to present the non-governmental perspectives of selected issues in some of the deliberations.

We have outlined the programme in such a way as to allow for detailed discussions on selected topics of interest to Malaysia. They will be in the form of sessions as well as workshops. They will touch on bilateral matters, multilateral issues and other international and transnational issues. Institutional topics relating to resources including financial and human resources will also be discussed. A session on integrity in public service has also been included. These inputs, it is hoped, will provide the much needed value added contribution to assist the government in formulating a more enlightened, pragmatic, effective and realistic foreign policy. An inter-agency session has also been arranged to provide invaluable insights into how we could maximize resources through effective multi-agency coordination at missions.

YAB Dato' Seri,

There is no doubt that our principled foreign policy has earned us great respect in the international community. I do not wish to list down here our achievements from the 60s until today. I would like, however, to say that our achievements were made possible with the support of all quarters. These include financial and human resources. We are counting on such support especially from the Prime Minister. Only with adequate resources would we be able to function effectively.

I would also like to add that the Heads of Mission Conference has been found to be an effective forum in developing strategies to implement our foreign policy. However, I do recognize that we have not been able to hold the Heads of Mission Conference on a more regular basis. Rather, we have it when we can. In view of the importance of the conference, I am of the opinion that we should strive to organize it if not annually, once in every two years.

Lastly, let me reiterate my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the Honourable Prime Minister for consenting to hold this interactive session and to meet our Heads of Mission. We are also grateful for his generosity in hosting a dinner tonight.

With these words, I have the honour to invite our Prime Minister to address the Conference.

You have the floor, Sir.