

By : DATUK SERI SYED HAMID ALBAR
Venue : PALACE OF THE GOLDEN HORSES, KUALA LUMPUR
Date : 29 MARCH 2005
Title : WELCOMING REMARKS AT THE LAUNCHING OF THE CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME FOR OIC COUNTRIES

The Honorable Dato' Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi
Prime Minister of Malaysia;

His Excellency Vice President of Sierra Leone

Honorable Ministers, Deputy Ministers;

His Excellency Dr. Ahmad Mohamed Ali
President of the IDB;

Mr. Ufuk Gokcen
Representative of the OIC Secretary General

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Asalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabararakatuh and Good Afternoon

1. On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, I wish to express our profound thanks and gratitude to the Honorable Dato' Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia for his presence this afternoon to officially launch the Capacity Building Programme for the OIC Member countries.

2. I also would like to welcome our distinguished guests, especially the Heads of Delegation from the OIC Member countries, who have traveled from far and near to Kuala Lumpur for this auspicious event. I deeply appreciate your presence today.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. It is indeed fitting that the Honorable Prime Minister has graciously consented to officially launch the Programme. It is him, who with his vision and foresight, had given birth to this Programme. His instruction was crystal clear in that Malaysia has to embark on a meaningful Programme, with the collaboration of the OIC Member countries, to help the member countries, particularly the least developed members to enhance and strengthen their capacities to accelerate economic development so as to free these countries from the shackles of poverty and underdevelopment.

4. The United Nations has identified 50 countries as the least developed countries, which represent the poorest and weakest segment of the international community.

22 of these countries are members of the OIC. The Report issued by the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries based in Ankara ,Turkey has identified that out of 57 member countries of the OIC , 29 are currently identified as low- income countries, 17 countries as lower middle income , 6 as middle income and only 5 are classified as high income.

5. The picture becomes worse when we take into account the total external debt of the OIC member countries, which at the end of 2002, amounted to USD 649 billion. 20 OIC countries are categorized as severely indebted countries, 16 as moderately indebted, 15 as less indebted and only 6 are classified as not indebted.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. Indeed we must ask ourselves why the Muslim nations and the Ummah have to endure all this and more importantly what are we going to do about it? Obviously, we have not done enough to help fellow Ummah to free themselves from underdevelopment, poverty, hunger, malnutrition and destitute.

7. I sincerely believe that if we try hard and collectively strive to address these problems, we can achieve some measures of success. Working together to enhance our capacity is the only way forward to bring about the desired changes for them to improve their standard of living.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

8. The Launching of the Programme this afternoon has put on track the foundation for the implementation of the three pilot projects in the target countries, namely Bangladesh, Mauritania and Sierra Leone.

9. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the OIC Steering Committee and other OIC member countries for their unequivocal support for the implementation of this Programme. I would like to mention here specifically of the strong support given by the President of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and his staff who had contributed invaluable inputs in the formulation of the Action Plan for the Capacity Building Programme. I would also like to express my thanks to the Secretary- General of the OIC for his support.

10. I would like to once again, thank the Honorable Dato' Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia for his presence. I am confident , Sir , that your important Keynote Address this afternoon will inspire us to work harder in our efforts to bring prosperity and dignity to the Ummah.

11. On that note, it gives me great pleasure to invite The Honorable Prime Minister of Malaysia and Chairman of the Tenth OIC Summit to deliver your Keynote Address

and officially launch the Capacity Building Programme for the OIC countries.

You have the floor, Sir.