

THE 14TH SCIENCE COUNCIL OF ASIA (SCA14) INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
19/06/2014

ISTANA HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR

Assalamu'alaikum WBT,
Good Morning and Salam 1 Malaysia

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Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI)

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President, Science Council of Asia (SCA)

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President, Academy of Sciences Malaysia (ASM)

Professor Dr Takashi Onishi
President, Science Council of Japan (SCJ)

Your Excellencies,

Fellows of Academy of Sciences Malaysia,

Distinguished guests and participants of the 14th SCA International Conference 2014,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It gives me great pleasure to be here today for the closing ceremony of the 14th Science Council of Asia International Conference 2014. I would like to congratulate the organizers, namely the International Council for Science (ICSU) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, the Academy of Sciences Malaysia (ASM), the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation Malaysia (MOSTI) and the Institute for Environment and Development (LESTARI).

2. I am certain all of you have had enriching deliberation, and exchange of knowledge, ideas

and experiences pertaining to the issues of sustainable development. Am sure these valuable exchanges would help the region to move forward together, for the benefit of our present and future generations.

3. The theme “Future Earth: Research for Global Sustainability and a Holistic Understanding of Sustainable Development in Asia” carries a very important message to not only scientists, but to everyone. As to date, there have been so many efforts, and initiatives mooted by governments, interest groups and private sector organizations in order to understand and promote programmes as well as deliverables to improve and enhance sustainable development agenda.

4. However, despite of the time and money spent on these initiatives, similar concerns and predicaments have been raised, deliberated and discussed, time and again. But yet, our biggest challenge remains the need to identify clear and permanent solutions towards ensuring our natural resources will be safe from depletion and exploitation, which will have a profound effect on our socio-economic well being.

5. In addition, following the 2008 global economic crisis, many governments have reduced public spending and investments which consequently have negatively impacted their economic growth, social stability and even sustainability. Therefore, lesson learned, it is time for us to be more scientific in creating our own sustainable development paths. A more effective and comprehensive development and growth model should be advocated to guide governments on the need to monitor and regulate the use of natural resources, and therefore consumption, through a range of policy tools.

6. I do believe government and political leaders are willing, and encouraged, to engage more actively with the intellectual community, such as all of you here today. The inputs and views will certainly help to promulgate and strengthen policies on sustainable development ecosystem. This is even more pressing in view of the hectic and rapid pace of the global economic and commercial activities taking place, as we speak today.

7. In this relation, I am happy to note that this Conference has provided the right platform and opportunity for exchange of ideas and best practices, with a view to further identify strategic options and way forward for the region to progress its agenda on sustainable development taking into account our various levels of development and living standards.

8. Having said this, as well as recognizing existing capacity and capability challenges, Governments and scientific communities in Asia must strengthen and accelerate Smart-partnerships. I hope we could institute an intensive networking programme amongst Asian scientific experts, and build a knowledge-disseminating hub, in order to extensively apply the culture of science to the appropriate sustainable development practices.

9. Not only would this initiative be applicable to the Government-academic community, but it could be extended to other relevant stakeholders, and NGOs at large. For instance, by nurturing close cooperation between relevant science authorities/agencies together with the business community as well as strategic interest groups in Asia, we could adopt and promote sustainable technologies, policies and business models across Asian boundaries in a concerted and co-ordinated efforts, hence, moving towards promoting 'Future Earth' for Asia as a whole.

Ladies and gentlemen,

10. There is also a need to comprehend and appreciate the meaning and context of 'sustainable development' for a developing country. We should get our priorities right. Developed countries that have already made progress in the environment sector should constantly collaborate closely and engage with developing countries in areas such as capacity building, as well as cooperation initiatives to help improve the sustainable development process. In fact, this was an important and crucial element agreed to during the Rio Summit in 1992. Such collaboration has not always been easy, but we must strive harder and earnestly endeavor to make it work.

11. Developing countries also have a duty to develop and bring a better life to their people. Hence, it is important to remember that when we speak of sustainable development, we must also factor in equity. The sustainable development agenda must help to reverse environmental degradation, and make the world a better place for everyone, and benefit all citizens.

Ladies and gentlemen,

12. One of the overriding points from this Conference revolves around the need to strengthen human resource capacities and capabilities. The shortage of right STI talents is a common concern for all of us, and so is brain drain that continues to be a growing concern in many developed and developing countries, particularly in this region.

13. Therefore, I hope this perennial issue will continue to be a key element in your future sessions and deliberations. Not only that we need to identify and produce enough talents, we also need to have access to supreme quality talents. In Malaysia today, the Government has identified 5 major universities as Research Universities, with the objective of elevating higher quality research products, nurturing and empowering the role of young scientific community to support and drive Malaysia's future development in strategic sectors, namely sustainable development.

14. It is my hope that the Science Council of Asia would further facilitate, encourage and elevate exchange programmes of young researchers and science students in Asia. Such initiative would help in preparing them to become key players in helping their respective country to succeed in establishing the most relevant and cost efficient environmental-friendly technologies, as well as formulate enabling and effective regulatory frameworks. These would certainly help to overcome the many facets of challenges and barriers faced by governments in their efforts to implement broad-based socio-economic measures that take into account all dimensions of sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen

15. All of us here share many common concerns on global sustainability. I would like to stress that the take-aways from these discussions must not all be about pledging huge amount of financial resources, but to think carefully on how the available resources can be strengthened, strategically harnessed and effectively utilised. Therefore, by working collectively as a team, I am certain Asia as a region will be able to contribute immensely to the efforts of achieving global sustainability, comprising economic growth and human well-being.

16. In conclusion, I would like to state that Malaysia and Asian countries have many common experiences in our development process. Many of us have progressed from agriculture to industry and now we are entering the next stage of services and a knowledge-based economy. We have learnt many lessons along the way that we can share with each other. What is important is that we should continue working together to develop our shared Asian dream. We will co-operate and prosper together.

17. Once again, I am pleased to be a part of this Conference, which is of such significance towards affirming a better future for Asia. Therefore, it is with great honor for me to officially close the '14th Science Council of Asia Conference 2014, themed Future Earth: Research for Global Sustainability and a Holistic Understanding of Sustainable Development of Asia'.

18. I wish all of you a safe return to your home country, and I do hope that you will find time to visit Malaysia again, and enjoy the many tourists' attractions and sights that my beautiful Malaysia has to offer.

Thank you.