

**WELCOMING REMARKS BY Y.BHG DATO' KU JAFAR KU SHAARI, DIRECTOR
GENERAL OF THE INSTITUTE OF DIPLOMACY AND FOREIGN RELATIONS (IDFR) AT
THE ASEAN ANNIVERSARY FORUM HELD AT THE IDFR AUDITORIUM ON
13 SEPTEMBER 2011**

The Honourable Datuk Richard Riot Anak Jaem
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia

Y.Bhg Dato' Prof. Ir. Dr. Sahol Hamid Abu Bakar
Vice Chansellor, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)

Y.Bhg Ambassador Zainal Abidin Ahmad
Director General,
ASEAN-Malaysia National Secretariat
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia

Y.Bhg Dato' Dr. Mohd Yusof Ahmad
Director
Institute of ASEAN Studies and Global Affairs (INSPAG)
Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies
Universiti Teknologi MARA

Tan Sri-Tan Sri, Dato-Dato

Excellencies

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and Good Morning.

I wish you all a very warm welcome to the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR),
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia.

Let me first of all express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Honourable Datuk Richard
Riot Anak Jaem, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia for taking time off from his busy
schedule to grace today's function and to give the keynote address entitled "Unity In Diversity"
in the context of ASEAN's 44th anniversary celebrations this year.

Today's event is actually part of the activities held in Malaysia to commemorate the
establishment of ASEAN more than four decades ago. In previous years, this event is usually

held in the month of August, the month in which ASEAN Day falls, but for this year, we decided to delay it slightly to September taking into consideration the fasting month and the Hari Raya holidays.

As in previous years, today's event is the result of close collaboration between IDFR, the Institute of ASEAN Studies and Global Affairs (INSPAG) of University Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and the ASEAN-Malaysia National Secretariat of Wisma Putra.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to highlight to you that the title of the keynote address "Unity in Diversity" is also the theme of ASEAN Day this year. As we draw closer to the 2015 deadline set for the establishment of the ASEAN Community, it is only natural that the countries involved will review the progress achieved by ASEAN thus far with the view to strengthening those aspects that unite us as a regional grouping and to work on areas that impedes progress to realizing its vision of developing a truly united and people oriented ASEAN.

The target year 2015 is especially significant to Malaysia as it will assume the chairmanship of ASEAN that year. In this regard, we are very fortunate indeed that the Honourable Deputy Minister himself is with us today to give his perspective with regard to the progress made by ASEAN and the road ahead for achieving its vision.

With regard to IDFR's role, I am pleased to note here that since its early days, IDFR has made quite significant contribution towards developing better understanding and friendship among the diplomats in the ASEAN countries through its numerous international courses that are quite well attended by participants from these countries. Among the courses organized by IDFR include a two week course called "Forum for ASEAN Young Diplomats" held annually and usually attended by two participants from each of the ASEAN countries and the Republic of Korea. The course is funded by the Republic of Korea through the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. I would like to take this opportunity to record my thanks and appreciation to the Republic of Korea for funding this course since 1999.

In addition, many diplomats from the ASEAN countries also attend IDFR's international courses funded under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme and also our Masters programme which is funded directly by IDFR's budget. Over the years, we have build up a large alumni of IDFR trained diplomats in the ASEAN countries which bodes well for enhancing

cooperation and friendship between Malaysia and the ASEAN member countries and also between the ASEAN countries.

I also wish to take this opportunity to highlight the fact that just last year IDFR and UiTM signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to have closer cooperation in the area of diplomatic training and research. This MoU has provided the opportunity for IDFR to develop close cooperation with UiTM and to host joint training activities including the hosting of events like the one today. We are also looking into the possibility of organizing a joint PhD programme in international relations in the near future.

I am pleased to add that over the last few months, IDFR has established institutional linkages and collaboration with a number of local and foreign institutions. The latest is with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) which has offered to conduct some of its conference diplomacy and climate change courses here in IDFR with the view to making it a regional centre for some of its training programmes.

We are also planning to reach out to other universities in the country that has international relations programmes with the view to forging closer cooperation and in undertaking joint activities in the field of diplomatic training and research.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the organizers, I wish to take this opportunity to thank all our distinguished panelists for kindly agreeing to share their ideas and views in the panel discussion entitled “The Changing Regional and Global Scenario: Challenges and Prospects for ASEAN” that will be held immediately after the keynote address. This topic was chosen by the organizers after noting the tremendous changes taking place on the regional and global scene today which are bound to bring about challenges as well opportunities to the ASEAN countries.

My sincere thanks and appreciation also goes to the co-organizers of this event, namely the Institute of ASEAN Studies and Global Affairs (INSPAG) of UiTM and the ASEAN-Malaysia National Secretariat in Wisma Putra for their support and cooperation in hosting this event.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our participants here today for coming to this event. I hope you will enjoy yourselves and benefit in terms of developing better understanding of the steps being taken to strengthen ASEAN as a regional community and the challenges and prospects it is likely to face in the years ahead.

Thank you