

Speech by
Tan Sri Hasmy Agam
Executive Chairman of IDFR
Diploma in Diplomacy (DiD)
Institute of Diplomacy & Foreign Relations (IDFR)

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Y. Bhg. Amb. Abdullah Faiz Zain, Senior Director of IDFR,

Y. Bhg. Dato' Than Tai Hing,

Senior Officers of the Prime Minister's Department, Wisma Putra, Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), Atomic Energy Licensing Board (AELB), Tourism Malaysia,

(H.E. the High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam and Officers from the High Commission),

(H.E. the High Commissioner..or Senior Officials of Australian High Commission...and Japan?),

Officers and Staff of IDFR,

Senior Government Officers,

Course Participants of the Diploma in Diplomacy, including our guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum and a very good evening to all of you,

At the outset let me congratulate the course participants, for having successfully completed the Diploma in Diplomacy programme. This is the first course of its kind

conducted at this Institute, being an upgraded and extended version of the earlier four-month course attended by young officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other Government Ministries and Departments some of whose officers also serve abroad. As the course participants would readily attest, this six-month programme was an intensive one and had demanded a lot out of them, perhaps not so much physically but certainly intellectually; perhaps in other ways, too. It is a matter of particular satisfaction for me to see the realization of this programme, having planned for it since I assumed this post in mid-2007. It is indeed most gratifying that I am able to see it come to fruition just before I leave IDFR for another assignment. In this regard, I would like to record my deep thanks and gratitude to Wisma Putra, in particular, to Secretary-General of the Ministry, Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa, as well as to the Ministry's Senior Management, for their strong support and encouragement without which this programme would not have been possible.

I would also like to express our thanks to the Prime Minister's Department, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Tourism Malaysia and the Atomic Energy Licensing Board for their support for this Diploma in Diplomacy programme and express the hope that this support will continue to be extended to IDFR in the future.

Additionally, I would also like to record our thanks and gratitude to the Public Service Department for their confidence in IDFR in conducting the Course and giving us the green light to award the participants with a Diploma in Diplomacy (DiD). We are very proud that like the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN) we have now become one of the few Government training institutes that could confer a professional Diploma. So, for those PTD officers who attend this Course and obtain their DiD, they would have acquired two professional Diplomas early in their career-the Diploma in Public Administration (or DPA) by INTAN and their DiD.

I would also like, at this stage, to record our thanks and appreciation to the Governments, specifically, the Foreign Ministries of Brunei Darussalam, Australia, Japan and Germany for their positive response to our invitation and had sent one of their young diplomats-in the case of Australia two diplomats-to participate in the Regional and International Module of this course. Their two-week presence in IDFR has

been extremely beneficial to the Malaysian course participants in that they provided new and fresh perspectives on the issues discussed in class. I trust it has been equally beneficial and enriching to our foreign course participants and hope that this attachment programme at IDFR could lead to a regular exchange programme between IDFR and your respective training Institutes or Academies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have been informed that the overall assessment by the Course participants of the programme has been a positive one. Your comments and suggestions will be seriously considered with a view to improving the Course in terms of its content, approach and methodology so that, thanks to you, future generations of young diplomats would benefit even more from this Diploma Course.

For this first Course, we hope that the knowledge and skills you have acquired over the past six (6) months have helped to prepare you for the long diplomatic career ahead. While there is no such thing as a stereotyped diplomat, a good man and effective one must possess many outstanding personal qualities, such as a strong commitment and dedication to work, sincerity, integrity, loyalty, trustworthiness, courage, confidence and humility, among others. He or she must also be equipped with the appropriate professional attributes of objectivity, versatility, accountability, persuasiveness and of course, tactfulness-that essential quality of the true diplomat. I trust all of these qualities have been thoroughly analysed, dissected and hopefully internalized and inculcated in you, as they will serve you well as you face the challenges ahead.

In addition, a good diplomat ought to be constantly aware of, and keep abreast with, the fast changing pace of international developments, particularly in the context of globalization and shifting world events and to be able to understand the dynamic interaction and inter-relationships between and among nations in world politics and among different stake holders in the international arena, covering a whole range of issues of relevance and importance to his or her country. He or she must be well versed with his or her government's national policies and be ever ready to promote or defend these policies in the national interest.

In addition to the above-mentioned attributes, a good and effective diplomat must have a predisposition for acquiring new skills, including foreign languages, and a strong interest in or desire for self-improvement. Developing the good habit of reading, and enlarging one's circle of contacts to include not just fellow diplomats, but also scholars, intellectuals, journalists, politicians, businessmen, and other members of society would serve the diplomat well in the performance of his or her duties.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministries and Agencies that had sent you here to attend this Course attach high importance to your career development and accordingly have invested a lot of resources and efforts to ensure that your passage into the diplomatic world starts on the right footing, that is, in adding value to yourself, the Ministry of Department, and the country as a whole, through such a programme as this. Clearly, in meeting the challenges of the globalised and inter-connected world of today, generalists are no longer adequate; we need specialists and experts in various disciplines who can contribute towards the formulation of sound foreign policies and in the effective conduct of these policies.

As a believer in self-improvement through training, I would strongly encourage you all to pursue education as a life-long endeavor as there is always something new to be learned, however learned one is. For this reason, the Government has given a lot of emphasis on human capital development so as to ensure that our officials, including diplomats, would be among the best and brightest professionals in the business. In the highly competitive world we live in today our officials and diplomats must be well-prepared for the job through training and re-training and more training.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Throughout this programme, you have been exposed to various theories and approaches in international relations, analyzed issues of current interests, participated in simulations and exercises on negotiations, public speaking and public diplomacy, cross-cultural interaction, including a brief attachment stint at our Embassy in Vietnam. I trust these have broadened your perspectives, heightened your confidence level,

enhanced your professional skills and prepared you well to assume the challenging role awaiting you. The success of this programme is measured not only by the quality and quantity of the modules you have undergone, but by your ability to make the most of what you have learned and internalized in your daily undertakings to reach a higher level of excellence and professionalism. Attending a course, such as this, is only the beginning of your long journey towards self-fulfillment and personal and professional enhancement.

I hope you will also remember that in the age of information superhighway and globalization, in fulfilling your role as an effective and efficient diplomat, you will be evaluated not only by the number of reports or dispatches you send to Headquarters, but also by their timeliness, relevance as well as soundness of your assessment. Your reports will contribute towards a better understanding of a particular situation by the Ministry or department, thereby facilitating sound decision-making by the Government. Of course, as junior officers, the reports you produced will naturally be vetted by your senior colleagues, or by the Ambassador him/ herself, but this should not be an excuse to give less than your best effort.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As it has often been said that diplomacy is the first line of a country's defence, hence the added importance of skilful diplomacy. Therefore, on every appropriate occasion the diplomat, whenever necessary, must speak up and speak out on his or her country's positions, and correct any distorted image or misrepresentation that may have been created by certain quarters, in the interest of presenting the truth and projecting a positive image of his or her country and its leadership.

As always, behind every successful man or woman is the ever-supportive spouse. So, do please give quality time and due importance to your family members, however busy and preoccupied you are, for nothing motivates a person more than a harmonious and supportive home environment. On that note, let me thank the family members who are with us at this function tonight.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank Wisma Putra, officers and staff of IDFR, our guest lecturers, and all who have contributed towards making this programme a success.

Congratulation to all DiD participants for having successfully completed your course and I wish you every success in your career. And thank you once again and Bon Voyage and have a safe journey home to our guests from abroad.

Thank you.