

**Welcoming Remarks by
YB Dato' Sri Reezal Merican Naina Merican
Deputy Foreign Minister of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia
IDFR Public Lecture Series
19 October 2015, 9.30 am-11.30 am, IDFR
“Sustainable Development Goals: Key Consideration for a People-Centred
ASEAN”**

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim,

Her Excellency Miss Helen Clark
Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and
Chair of the United Nations Development Group

His Excellency Datuk Othman Hashim
Secretary-General,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia

Ms. Michelle Gyles-McDonnough
United Nations Resident Coordinator for Malaysia, United Nations Malaysia

Tan Sri Dato Dr. Michael Yeoh
Chief Executive Officer,
ASIAN Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI)

Madam Hajah Norani Ibrahim
Acting Director-General of IDFR

Excellencies,
Members of the Diplomatic Corp,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

*Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh, a very good morning to all and
Salam Sehati Sejiwa*

1. It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations and to this Public Lecture Series co-organised by IDFR, ASLI and the UNDP. I would also like to welcome Her Excellency Miss Helen Clark to Malaysia. We are indeed fortunate and privileged to have you with us this morning to share your thoughts and views on the key principles of the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs) and how it can complement our endeavour to establish a people-oriented and people-centred ASEAN Community.

2. In a sense, our gathering today has come at a very opportune time. A time when the United Nations had just celebrated its 70th Anniversary; a time when world Leaders have just adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; and a time when ASEAN is in the process of launching the ASEAN Community at the 27th ASEAN Summit here in Kuala Lumpur next month.

3. The world today is facing many challenges; poverty, unemployment, frequent and devastating natural disasters, global health threats, violent extremism and terrorism, environmental degradation, climate change and many more which are detrimental to human livelihoods and wellbeing. Crucially, our Leaders' decision to undertake bold and responsible commitment at this juncture demonstrates the mutual obligation and desire to provide a better and promising future for our peoples.

4. I am proud to say that Malaysia joins all countries and stakeholders in supporting and implementing these extraordinary plans. As Chairman of ASEAN in 2015, Malaysia has set its priority areas, which among others, include the creation of a truly 'People-Centred ASEAN'. This will be an even more powerful vehicle for the realisation of our peoples' aspirations for good governance, transparency, higher standards of living, sustainable development, the empowerment of women and greater opportunity for all. A 'People-Centred ASEAN' also means a greater and deeper involvement of all sectors of society in ASEAN's work. It also means that ASEAN will no longer be the domain of the political and bureaucratic elites.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. The Sustainable Development Goals are now acknowledged as the People's Agenda. There are seventeen universal goals which will guide the development for the next fifteen years in areas of critical importance to our people and the planet. These goals are comprehensive, inclusive, transformative, far-reaching and people-

centred. The SDGs have ambitious targets and will strive to meet the people's aspiration for a more peaceful, prosperous and sustainable future.

6. With these goals, countries will strive to end poverty and hunger everywhere, promote healthy lives and wellbeing for all, reduce inequalities within and among countries, build peaceful, just and inclusive societies, combat climate change, and protect the planet and its natural resources. Countries will undertake measures to create sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities.

7. Based on the above, we note that the elements outlined in the SDGs are in line and could complement ASEAN's efforts in creating a People-Centred ASEAN. We have and will always place our people at the core of what we are doing. Every policy formulated, every decision-made, every implementation of plans and projects will be focused towards the creation of a sustainable and greater future for our ASEAN citizens. As such, the SDGs and ASEAN's aspiration for a people-centred community are indeed in tandem as both envisage to provide a conducive and harmonious living environment for our community.

8. With this in mind, I am of the view that we need to identify ways to align both the elements so as to ensure that they correspond with each other. One way to do this is by utilising the existing cooperation between ASEAN and the United Nations. The ASEAN-UN cooperation will soon enter a new phase and I am pleased to note that the recent ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting with the United Nations Secretary-General and President of the 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly a few weeks ago in New York, has agreed for ASEAN and the UN to develop a five year action plan encompassing the key elements of the ASEAN Post-2015 Vision and also the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I am encouraged with the UN's keen interest in this regard and I hope the proposals and recommendations that came out of that meeting will be translated into concrete actions in due course.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. On that note, I wish to reiterate Malaysia's unwavering support and commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I would also like to express our gratitude to the United Nations for being a strong proponent and a good friend to ASEAN. We are indeed thankful to the United Nations for its contribution to ASEAN's community building efforts.

10. Once again, we look forward with anticipation at what Her Excellency Miss Helen Clark has to say on this important subject. Given the far-sighted vision and your hands-on involvement in the formulation of SDGs, surely your address will provide us with useful and valuable lessons towards this important endeavour. I am confident that together, ASEAN and UN, are able to establish a forward looking strategy for the post-2015 era.

I thank you.