

**Closing Remark by Prof Dr. Haji Hazman Shah Abdullah, Assistant Vice
Chancellor,
Institute of Quality and Knowledge Advancement (INQKA), Universiti Teknologi
MARA (UiTM)
at the 44th ASEAN Anniversary Forum on
“The Changing Regional and Global Scenario:
Challenges and Prospects for ASEAN”
13th September 2011**

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

Y Bhg Tan Sri Radzi bin Abdul Rahman
Secretary General
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia,

Y Bhg Dato' Ku Jaafar bin Ku Shaari
Director General
IDFR, KLN

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

His Excellencies the Ambassadors of ASEAN and other Countries in Kuala Lumpur

Tun, Tan Sri-Tan Sri and Datuk-Datuk

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalam Mualaikum and a Very Good Afternoon to you all.

On behalf of the Vice Chancellor, Dato' Prof Dr. Sahol Hamid Abu Bakar, I wish to thank the organizing committee for extending this invitation to him to deliver the closing remarks to today's Forum held to celebrate the 44th Anniversary of ASEAN's founding on August 8, 1967. It is with deep regrets that he is

unable to be with us this time due to pressing University matters which required his presence.

I would also like to say 'Thank you' to The Honorable Datuk Richard Riot Anak Jaem, the Deputy Foreign Minister, for consenting to deliver the Keynote address this morning on the theme "Unity in Diversity" to commemorate the Anniversary celebrations. As the timing of the event this year occurred within the holy month of Ramadan, the date was moved to today, 13th of September 2011. We are indeed grateful for YB's kind presence, strong commitment and support for this event.

This year's celebration is the 4th in the series held jointly by the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR) and University Teknologi MARA (UiTM) to celebrate the founding of ASEAN. I would like to congratulate the Institute of ASEAN Studies, Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, the

Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR) and the ASEAN National Secretariat, Wisma Putra for their efforts to make the event a success. Today's Forum demonstrates the continuing commitment of all the three agencies towards efforts to support and promote the ASEAN agenda at the national and regional levels.

Since its establishment in 2004 at the behest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Institute of ASEAN Studies under the Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, UiTM has been actively engaged in academic and policy-oriented research, publications, conferencing, institutional networking and ASEAN awareness enhancing activities, at both the national and international levels, in support of the ASEAN objective of creating an ASEAN Community by 2015. This objective has witnessed

regular collaboration between both institutions and with others on a number of joint-projects in the recent past. Among these include consultations and academic input on ASEAN and other

regional issues, whenever necessary, and the regular holding of national and international level seminars, conferences, roundtables and dialogues on issues pertinent to ASEAN and regional stability. I am happy that UiTM has been able to accommodate Wisma Putra's need in these areas, whenever appropriate. I also look forward to further enhancement of this collaboration, particularly in the area of joint research on these issues in the future.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the Ministry for the continued confidence and support of the Institute to remain relevant on matters affecting ASEAN. The signing of two MoUs between UiTM and IDFR as well as with the Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Counter Terrorism (SEARCCT) has

further reinforced this strong collaborative relationship. The holding of this Forum will give added-value to these MoUs in terms of promoting greater intellectual and academic exchanges among officials, scholars, experts, civil society groups and members of the

public and on issues affecting national, ASEAN and regional stability. These formal arrangements, it is hoped, will result in more such joint-initiatives in the future for mutual gain.

As one of UiTM's Center of Excellence, the Institute of ASEAN Studies, FSPPP has undertaken active efforts to widen its institutional linkages with counterpart institutions at both the national and international levels in support of the ASEAN objectives. At the national level, joint academic initiatives have been forged with other national academic institutions, think-tanks, public sector agencies and civil society groups for the purpose. At

the regional level, similar joint academic and research projects have also been established with reputable regional institutions such as the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) and Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University Singapore (RSIS-NTU), Prince Songkla University Thailand, the Asian Institute of Management, Philippines, the Center for Asian Security Studies, India (CASS-India) as well as other regional counterpart institutions in support of the ASEAN objectives.

This year, INSPAG's collaboration with RSIS-NTU has witnessed the holding of a Joint-Workshop on 'Human Security in ASEAN' last July. October will witness the holding of a joint regional conference with CASS-India on 'The Conflict in the South China Sea'. In December, a regional dialogue will be jointly organized with La Trobe University Australia on 'Malaysia,

Australia and ASEAN relations.’ Efforts are also ongoing to further broaden the scope of this relationship with others in the region and internationally in full support of the ASEAN regional agenda.

At the academic level, the Institute is currently at the planning stage of offering post-graduate level courses on ‘International Relations and Diplomacy’ by course work and research. In the medium term, post-graduate level courses on ASEAN Studies will also be offered to prospective regional candidates to promote greater understanding of ASEAN and regional issues affecting ASEAN among Malaysia’s and the region’s next generation of leaders and policy-makers. These initiatives are also consistent with UiTM’s current agenda to enhance its international profile to achieve its objective of becoming a global university.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year’s lecture theme, “Unity in Diversity”, as highlighted by the Honorable Deputy Foreign Minister in his Keynote address this morning, aptly describes the daunting task that lies ahead for ASEAN leaders to forge a strong sense of unity, purpose, commitment and vision from among the diverse and often conflicting interests of ASEAN Member States. While acknowledging the complexity of the task, YB Deputy Foreign Minister, however, has also voiced optimism at the prospects of success of the ASEAN Community project.

In the forum segment, I was informed that panel members have similarly highlighted the varied sets of problems and challenges that continue to pose serious impediments to the full

realization of the 2015 Community agenda. Recent socio-political, economic and security developments within the region and globally have also added further pressures on ASEAN's ability to manage these issues effectively. If not managed, these developments could potentially undermine the ASEAN Community objective and damage ASEAN's credibility internationally.

Various suggestions and recommendations have also been offered by members of the panel and participants during the ensuing dialogue to avert this possibility. I hope their constructive comments and ideas will be given due consideration by national and regional policy-makers in their effort to manage these challenges and forge greater unity from among ASEAN's diverse community consistent with the theme of the Keynote address and the Forum to realize the objective of the ASEAN Community project by 2015.

For ASEAN, this year's celebration marks another important milestone in its journey towards regional integration and community building. As highlighted by the Honorable Deputy Foreign Minister, various initiatives have been undertaken to expedite the attainment of the objective at the national and regional levels. The Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity's (MPAC) endorsement at the Hanoi Summit last October represents a significant step in this direction. Consistent with the People-to-People pillar of the Master Plan, institutions such as UiTM can play an important role in helping to facilitate the implementation of the Master Plan at the ground level through the medium of Education. Jointly organized academic dialogues such as today's event can make positive contribution, albeit in the longer term perspective, towards the promotion of this agenda among the youths and the public, at the national level. In this connection, UiTM is honored to be part of the process.

Given the complex and diverse nature of region, the tasks confronting the region's policy-makers are indeed daunting. But as rightly pointed out by the Deputy Foreign Minister, Forum panelist and the participants, there also exists numerous opportunities which, if properly exploited, could help facilitate the attainment of the objective. The success of the endeavor however, is dependent on the active support, commitment and participation of every member of the community at all levels in the noble project. Here the inclusion of members of the civil society, academia, private sector and the media in the national and regional level decision-making process is crucial if a truly people-oriented ASEAN Community is to be realized.

The role of regional universities and school system in nurturing this norm among the region's youths is critical if the goal of unifying ASEAN's extremely diverse socio-cultural, economic, political, ethnic, religious and linguistic make-up is to be effectively nurture. The inclusion of these values in the national educational curriculums of all ASEAN Members States would represent an important step in this direction.

Finally I wish to also take this opportunity to thank all the committee members on both sides for their hard work, commitment and dedication in making today's event a reality. I hope the future will see more such collaborations between the two institutions for mutual benefit.

With that note, I shall now announce this forum on " The Changin Regional and Global Scenario: Challenges and Prospects for ASEAN" officially closed.

Thank you