

**SPEECH BY YANG BERHORMAT DATUK SERI AZMI KHALID
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AT THE LAUNCH OF THE BOOK
“MALAYSIA’S PEAT SWAMP FORESTS CONSERVATION AND
SUSTAINABLE USES”
1 JUNE 2006**

Dr Richard Leete, UNDP Resident Representative for Malaysia

Yang Bahagia, Dato Dr Abdul Razak Mohd Ali, Director-General, Forest Research Institute of Malaysia

Distinguished Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Selamat pagi,

First of all I would like to thank the organisers of this book launching for inviting me to be a part of this significant event. It is a great honour for me as I understand that the book provides unusual and rare information about one of our country’s least understood and precious natural resources – the peat swamp forests. I also understand that the book is the result of joint efforts between our government and UNDP Malaysia.

Allow me then to begin by congratulating UNDP Malaysia and FRIM for their outstanding collaboration and the launching this book entitled “Malaysia’s Peat Swamp Forests Conservation and Sustainable Use.” You have set an example of how goals of extensive magnitude can be achieved through teamwork. I deem that the book’s discussion on the conservation, importance and management of

Malaysia's Peat Swamp Forests as well as the elaboration on the project's development and the dynamics between the agencies, institutions and people involved would greatly enhance the country's thrust in safeguarding our natural resources. I strongly believe that this book would greatly contribute to our understanding of these precious forests and encourage experts and laymen into actively engaging in the noble cause of conserving Malaysia's unique Peat Swamp Forests.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as you may have already known, Malaysia is fortunate to be one of the 12 megadiverse countries in the world. This refers of course, to the richness of our biological diversity. However, many of us are not fully aware of the prestige as well as the gravity of being classified as such. This lack of knowledge has led to the wide-scale depletion of our natural resources particularly our peat swamp forests. Allow me to reiterate the Malaysian government's strong conviction and stand that we need to protect our environment for the benefit of the future generations. It is this deep conviction for conservation that has led the Malaysian government to approve the National Biodiversity Policy in 1998. This Policy aims to provide direction for the nation to implement strategies, actions plans and programmes on biological diversity for the conservation and sustainable utilization of its resources. The government further approved the National Policy on the Environment in 2002. This Policy aims at the continued economic, social and cultural progress and enhancement of the quality of life of Malaysians through environmentally sound and sustainable development. The Policy is based on eight (8) inter-related and mutually supporting principles set to harmonise economic development goals with environmental imperatives,

As the Executing and Implementing Agencies of this project, the Ministry of Natural Environment through Forest Research Institute Malaysia is working hand in hand with other key government and non- governmental agencies towards the

realisation of the project objectives. I am very pleased to inform you that our collaboration has yielded some significant results. We are pleased to note that, to date, some of the project's milestones include the

- Enrichment of data and information on flora and fauna diversity of low land ecosystem in particular PSF;
- Assistance in local community building of the Asli Jakun in order to enhance their capacity in managing supplemental livelihood;
- Introduction of mitigation measures to promote conservation of PSF and demonstrating selected action plans at the field level;
- Increase in public awareness and concern on the beauty and importance of Malaysia's Peat Swamp Forests through a systematic awareness-raising program which involved the participation of local journalists and the development of the project's website;
- Education of the younger generation including school children on the importance of biodiversity conservation and environmental awareness, with the Malaysian Nature Society and the
- Organisation of various targeted trainings for local staff at the state level with a view of strengthening the local capacity to manage forests in sustainable manner;

In addition, FRIM is also assisting in the implementation of the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) concept which, to a large extent, fulfills the ideals of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the RAMSAR Convention in Malaysia. This is a significant achievement as Malaysia is a signatory to both CBD and Ramsar Convention.

To UNDP/GEF and DANIDA and the project's donor countries, please accept our warm appreciation for your unstinted generosity. Malaysia is indeed grateful for your financial and technical assistance and support. I understand that there are a number of projects under biodiversity and climate change areas that are being implemented by UNDP with various agencies in Malaysia with the funding from

Global Environment Facility (GEF). Further more, UNDP Malaysia is working with NRE and other government agencies, NGOs, universities and private sector to design new programme of projects for 2006-2010 under the new GEF Resources Allocation Framework. This is in line with the commitment by the government in 9th Malaysia Plan to continue to work with international development partners to achieving targets beyond the Millennium Development Goals. UNDP Malaysia is a valued, trusted and reliable adviser to, and development partner with, the Malaysian Government and other stakeholders in national development.

At this point, I would also like to extend my most sincere gratitude to the key agencies, countries and people whose insurmountable contribution and support have moved the project successfully into its final year.

To FRIM and the Forestry Departments of Sabah, Sarawak and Pahang, thank you for your dedication in bringing this project to completion.

Terima kasih.