

OFFICIATING SPEECH BY
YANG BERHORMAT DATO' SRI REEZAL MERICAN NAINA
MERICAN
DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MALAYSIA

DIPLOMA IN DIPLOMACY (DiD) 2017 GRADUATION CEREMONY

BISMILLAHIRRAHMANIRRAHIM,
ASSALAMU'ALAIKUM WARAHMATULLAH WABARAKATUH,
SALAM 1MALAYSIA NEGARAKU AND A PLEASANT DAY TO ALL.

YANG BERBAHAGIA DATO' SERI RAMLAN IBRAHIM
SECRETARY GENERAL, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS;

YANG BERBAHAGIA DATUK MOHAMAD SADIK KETHERGANY
DIRECTOR GENERAL, INSTITUTE OF DIPLOMACY AND FOREIGN
RELATIONS;

THEIR EXCELLENCIES AMBASSADORS AND HIGH
COMMISSIONERS OF AUSTRALIA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, SPAIN,
UAE, AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS,

SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
IDFR;

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS;
FAMILIES AND FRIENDS;

MEMBERS OF THE GRADUATING CLASS OF DID 2017;
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;

1. IT IS MY GREAT PLEASURE TO BE HERE THIS MORNING AND WELCOME ALL OF YOU TO THE GRADUATION CEREMONY OF THE DIPLOMA IN DIPLOMACY 2017 PROGRAMME (DiD). I WISH TO EXTEND MY HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS TO THE DID CLASS OF 2017 FOR THE COMPLETION OF YOUR PROGRAMME.

2. I AM PLEASED TO LEARN THAT THE COORDINATION OF THIS COURSE HAD INVOLVED VARIOUS MINISTRIES, AMONG OTHERS; THE MINISTRY OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INDUSTRY (MITI), MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (MINDEF), MINISTRY OF FINANCE (MOF), THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S CHAMBER AND MANY MORE. I WAS ALSO INFORMED THAT THE STATE GOVERNMENTS OF SABAH AND PERAK WERE ALSO INVOLVED, IN EXPOSING OUR FUTURE DIPLOMATS TO THE SOME OF THE COLOURFUL THREADS OF OUR NATION'S TAPESTRY.

3. I HAD A GLANCE AT THE COURSE BRIEF, AND FROM THAT I CAN TELL YOU THAT THE MINISTRY IS INDEED SERIOUS IN DEVELOPING HOLISTIC MALAYSIAN DIPLOMATS. AS THE FOOT SOLDIERS OF OUR FOREIGN POLICY, OUR DIPLOMATS NEED TO BE ARMED AND EQUIPPED WITH THE RELEVANT SKILLS AND THE LATEST TOOLS TO ENGAGE EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHER COUNTRIES AND STAKEHOLDERS. I BELIEVE THAT THIS WILL SURELY ENHANCE OUR PRESTIGE AS A MIDDLE POWER IN THIS REGION.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

4. WISMA PUTRA HAS A LONG AND PROUD HISTORY THROUGHOUT THE EXISTENCE OF THE NATION-STATE CALLED MALAYSIA. AS THE YOUNG MALAYA GAINED ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM COLONIAL RULE, THE NEWLY APPOINTED DIPLOMATIC OFFICERS OF THE THEN-DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS BECAME ITS FIRST GUARDIANS AND ENSURED ITS SURVIVAL. AS WE GREW INTO A FULL-FLEDGED MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, OUR OFFICERS AGAIN PLAYED A MUCH MORE CRUCIAL PART IN THE FORMATION OF MALAYSIA IN 1963. UPHOLDING THESE RESPONSIBILITIES WOULD HAVE NOT BEEN MADE POSSIBLE WITHOUT THEIR UNDIVIDED COOPERATION, COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION.

5. THE REST, AS THEY SAY, IS HISTORY. YET, IT IS A HISTORY THAT HAS REMAINED LARGELY UNTOLD BEYOND THE WALLS OF WISMA PUTRA. MUCH OF THIS HISTORY WAS MADE WITHIN THESE VERY GROUNDS, WHERE THE MINISTRY ONCE STOOD. BUT THE WORLD MOVES ON, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, AND THE DEDICATED OFFICERS OF THIS MINISTRY LABOUR ON AS UNSUNG HEROES.

6. OVER THE DECADES, OUR FOREIGN SERVICE HAS EVOLVED AND ADVANCED SIGNIFICANTLY. I AM PROUD THAT, THROUGH THE EXCELLENT AND DEDICATED SERVICE OF OUR FORMER AND PRESENT DIPLOMATS, MALAYSIA IS REGARDED WITH RESPECT FOR OUR PRINCIPLED STAND ON MANY INTERNATIONAL ISSUES. MALAYSIA'S STAND ON PALESTINE AND THE SITUATION OF JERUSALEM, NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AND COMBATING TERRORISM ARE AMONG THE IMPRINTS OF OUR FOREIGN POLICY.

7. WITHIN THE REGIONAL CONTEXT, MALAYSIA HAS ALWAYS BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT IN ADDRESSING CHALLENGES THROUGH A STRONG, SUCCESSFUL AND INCLUSIVE ASEAN. IN ESSENCE, MALAYSIA LOOKS FORWARD TO THE REALISATION OF THE ASEAN COMMUNITY IN 2025, WHICH I BELIEVE IS CRUCIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MALAYSIA AND THE REGION AS A WHOLE.

8. ON THE HUMANITARIAN FRONT, WISMA PUTRA CONTINUES TO PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN AID AND SUPPORT TO THOSE IN DIRE NEED OF ASSISTANCE AROUND THE GLOBE. FROM THE BAY OF BENGAL TO THE COUNTRYSIDE OF SYRIA, OUR DIPLOMATS HAVE HIGHLIGHTED HUMAN SUFFERINGS IN THESE AREAS AND WORKED ON KEY INITIATIVES TO ALLEVIATE THE SITUATION.

9. WE CONTINUE TO PLAY A VITAL ROLE TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF STUDENTS AND MALAYSIANS ABROAD, ESPECIALLY THOSE AFFECTED IN CONFLICT ZONES. NO ONE CAN DOUBT THAT WISMA PUTRA HAS BEEN INTEGRAL IN PROTECTING OUR FELLOW CITIZENS ABROAD.

10. I AM HIGHLIGHTING ALL OF THESE IMMENSE RESPONSIBILITIES THAT WISMA PUTRA HAS TO SHOULDER, TO REMIND US ALL OF THE EXPECTATIONS OF OUR VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS, WHETHER IN THE GOVERNMENT OR THE WIDER PUBLIC. IT IS THEREFORE IMPERATIVE FOR IDFR TO PERFORM ITS CRITICAL ROLE AS THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S TRAINING ARM AND THINK TANK. OUR OBJECTIVES WILL ONLY BE FULFILLED IF IDFR CAN CONTINUOUSLY TRAIN AND RAISE THE BAR OF OUR DIPLOMATS IN THE AREAS OF DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.

TO THE DID GRADUATES,

11. I BELIEVE IT HAS BEEN A STEEP LEARNING CURVE FOR YOU OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS, NEVERTHELESS, THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING TO GREATER CHALLENGES. WHETHER DEFENDING THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES ABROAD OR ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUAL MALAYSIANS, YOU MUST BE PHYSICALLY, MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY STRONG TO BRAVE VARIOUS SITUATIONS.

12. LET THIS BE THE DAWN OF A NEW DAY, AS YOU HAVE GREAT TASKS AHEAD OF YOU. FOR YOU ARE CARRYING NOT ONLY MALAYSIA'S VISIONS AND GOALS, BUT ALSO THOSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. AMBITIONS SUCH AS THE UN'S SUSTAINABILITY DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS), AND TN50 ASPIRATIONS OF OUR FELLOW MALAYSIANS, SHOULD BE REALIZED WITH PRIDE AND PERSEVERANCE.

13. WITH ALL THAT ON YOUR PLATE, I WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME OF MY OWN EXPECTATIONS. EVEN IN MY RELATIVELY BRIEF TENURE AS DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, I HAVE SEEN HOW THE SCOPE OF DIPLOMATIC TASKS HAVE RADICALLY TRANSFORMED. TO CATCH UP WITH THE RAPID PACE OF THE CURRENT TIMES, THE DIPLOMAT OF THE FUTURE HAS TO BE A MULTIDISCIPLINARY ACTOR. THEREFORE, AS YOU BEGIN THIS NEXT STAGE OF YOUR CAREER, MY HOPE IS THAT YOU WILL SEIZE THE INITIATIVE TO PURSUE OTHER AVENUES FOR FURTHER SELF-DEVELOPMENT.

14. FIRST, SINCE YOU NOW HAVE A DIPLOMA IN DIPLOMACY, THE NEXT STAGE IS TO APPLY FOR POSTGRADUATE COURSES SUCH AS A MASTERS OR A PHD, PERHAPS IN OTHER AREAS ASIDE FROM INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. TODAY'S DIPLOMATS MUST BE PROFICIENT IN OUR TRADITIONAL FIELDS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, TRADE AND ECONOMY. BUT YOU MUST ALSO COPE WITH THE ADVANCES OF ICT, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, AND MAKE THESE PART OF YOUR WORK. SO IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR YOU TO EQUIP YOURSELF WITH IN-DEPTH KNOWLEDGE AND FURTHER EDUCATION, WHICH ONLY A POSTGRADUATE QUALIFICATION CAN OFFER.

15. SECONDLY, I WOULD URGE YOU TO TAKE ADVANCED CLASSES IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGES WHICH YOU HAVE LEARNT HERE, WHETHER IN ARABIC, FRENCH, MANDARIN OR SPANISH. IDFR CAN ONLY TAKE YOU SO FAR WITHIN SIX MONTHS, BUT YOU MUST BUILD ON THIS YOURSELVES TO TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL. AS NELSON MANDELA SAID, "IF YOU TALK TO A MAN IN A LANGUAGE HE UNDERSTANDS, THAT GOES TO HIS HEAD. IF YOU TALK TO HIM IN HIS OWN LANGUAGE, THAT GOES TO HIS HEART."

16. NEXT, YOU MUST DEVELOP AND ENHANCE THE SKILLS NEEDED FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY. THESE INCLUDE COMMUNICATION ANALYSIS, PLANNING AND DESIGN, MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTION, MARKETING AND DISSEMINATION. IN AN INCREASINGLY NOISY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT, MALAYSIA IS JUST ONE VOICE AMONG MANY. AS SUCH, I EXPECT YOU TO KNOW HOW TO WORK LIKE A PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR) PRACTITIONER, IN ORDER TO EFFECTIVELY PROMOTE THE COUNTRY'S INTERESTS.

17. FOURTH, GIVEN THE INCREASING NUMBERS OF MALAYSIANS TRAVELLING, WORKING AND STUDYING ABROAD, YOU WILL BE THE PUBLIC FACE TO A GROWING DIASPORA FOR CONSULAR AND OTHER MATTERS. THEREFORE, I MUST EMPHASIZE THE NEED FOR YOU TO HAVE ADEQUATE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND EMPATHY TRAINING. EMPATHY IS VITAL TO THE DIPLOMAT'S WORK, AS WE NEED TO BE ABLE TO SEE THE SITUATION FROM THE EYES OF OTHERS.

18. FINALLY, ALTHOUGH THIS HAS BEEN OFTEN SAID FROM YOUR SUPERIORS, I WANT YOU TO HEAR IT FROM THE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER HIMSELF – OUR DIPLOMATS MUST BE ABLE TO WRITE HIGH-QUALITY REPORTS. THIS MEANS, AMONG OTHERS, TO PROVIDE ASTUTE POLITICAL ANALYSIS AND PROPOSE RELEVANT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS, FOR THE MINISTRY'S MANAGEMENT AND THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP TO CONSIDER. OF COURSE, YOU HAVE TO COMPETE WITH THE 24-HOUR NEWS CYCLE AND SOCIAL MEDIA, OTHERWISE THE CONTENTS OF YOUR REPORTS WILL SURELY BE OVERTAKEN BY OTHER DEVELOPMENTS.

19. I WANT TO UNDERLINE ONCE AGAIN THAT YOU MUST TAKE IT UPON YOURSELF TO FURTHER DEVELOP THESE SKILLSETS. BUT I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT THESE EFFORTS WILL NOT GO UNNOTICED ONCE YOU PUT THEM TO GOOD USE.

20. WE ARE ALREADY SEEING THE FRUITS OF DATO' SERI RAMLAN'S TRANSFORMATION OF THE MINISTRY TO A MORE TRANSPARENT AND INCLUSIVE ORGANISATION, SUCH AS THE BIDDING SYSTEM FOR OVERSEAS POSTINGS. WITH THIS IN PLACE, YOUR FUTURE ASSIGNMENTS ARE NOW IN YOUR HANDS, AS LONG AS YOU CONTINUE TO IMPROVE AND UPSKILL YOURSELF. I AM CERTAIN THAT GOING FORWARD, THE MINISTRY WILL RECOGNISE AND PROMOTE MORE TALENTED OFFICERS, AND DEVELOP NEW INCENTIVES TO CULTIVATE LIFELONG LEARNING.

21. HAVING SAID THAT, AND SEEING YOU HERE TODAY AND FROM THE REMARKS I HAVE RECEIVED OF YOU, I AM CONFIDENT IN YOUR CAPABILITIES. I HOPE THAT COME WHAT MAY, YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO EXECUTE YOUR DUTIES WITH VIGOUR AND INTEGRITY, TOWARDS PROTECTING AND FURTHERING MALAYSIA'S INTERESTS AT THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

22. ON THAT NOTE, I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY APPRECIATION TO IDFR, ESPECIALLY TO DATUK SADIK AND THE DEDICATED OFFICERS AND STAFF FOR SUCCESSFULLY ORGANIZING THE DIPLOMA IN DIPLOMACY 2017 COURSE.

23. TO THE FAMILY MEMBERS, ALLOW ME TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR ENDLESS SUPPORT TO YOUR LOVED ONES. I AM SURE THAT THEY WILL FLOURISH IN THEIR CAREERS, AND IN THEIR SERVICE TO OUR BELOVED NATION.

24. LET ME CONCLUDE BY INVITING EVERYONE TO JOIN ME, IN CONGRATULATING THE DID GRADUATING CLASS OF 2017 ON THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS.

THANK YOU.

WABILLAH TAUFIK WALHIDAYAH

WASSALAMUALAIKUM WARAHMATULLAH WABARAKATUH.