

SPEECH BY
YANG BERBAHAGIA DATO' SRI AMRAN BIN MOHAMED ZIN
SECERATARY GENERAL OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AT THE GRADUATION CEREMONY OF THE
DIPLOMA IN DIPLOMACY (DiD) 2022

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim,

Assalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh, and good evening to all.

Yang Berbahagia Dato' Cheong Loon Lai

Deputy Secretary General II (Multilateral Affairs), Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Yang Berbahagia Dato' Roslan Abdul Rahman

Deputy Secretary General III (Management Services), Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Yang Berbahagia Dato' Dr Shazelina Zainul Abidin

Director General, Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations,

Senior Officials of Wisma Putra and respective agencies,

Graduating Class of Diploma in Diplomacy 2022, Cohort 1 and 2

Proud family members,

Distinguished Guests,

Members of the media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am pleased to be here to celebrate the graduation of 42 young officers who will be receiving their diploma in diplomacy. I wish to extend my heartiest congratulations to these officers who have successfully completed the four months mandatory training programme held at IDFR. This evening is also special to me because it provides me an opportunity to meet and greet not only the graduates but also their family members.

2. This ceremony is an important milestone for these young officers who will embark into their diplomatic career to promote and safeguard the country's national interest. With these high-spirited, enthusiastic young minds, I strongly believe that Malaysia's international relations is in good hands in years to come. I am happy and proud to be part of your rite of passage.

3. The Diploma in Diplomacy (D.I.D) programme is a four-month structured training programme specially designed for young officers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister's Department by IDFR since its inception in 1991. You have heard from the Director General how the content of the training programme is continuously reviewed and improvised to meet the expectations and demands of the day.

4. I am confident that the ministry's training arm, IDFR, will continue to spearhead training in the diplomatic and related fields. I would like to see IDFR takes its place as the premier training provider not only in the region but also internationally. In 2022, IDFR hosted and organised 120

programmes. In total, the institute has trained 3710 participants from various ministries, agencies, foreign diplomatic missions, as well as students from higher learning institutions. Besides that, IDFR also produced 6 publications in 2022 – books, magazines, if you will - all related to key international relations issues. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and all its officers will continue to extend their support to IDFR in the execution of its mandate in the future.

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

5. Since the establishment of Wisma Putra in 1956, Malaysia's diplomatic approaches and methodologies have evolved and advanced according to global needs and challenges. These approaches and methodologies are carried out through our bilateral, regional, and multilateral platforms. Our 105 active missions abroad are testimonials of the good bilateral relations between Malaysia and other countries. At the same time, Malaysia has also significantly contributed to the regional and multilateral fora, by being a founding member of ASEAN, and a member of the United Nations, APEC, OIC, D-8, South-South Cooperation, Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), to name a few.

6. In order to advance foreign policy planning and formulation, inputs from various stakeholders are crucial. Hence, the ministry has reactivated the role of the consultative council as a think tank to provide constructive inputs for the ministry. The Ministry, through IDFR is also actively engaging various institutions of higher learning and think tanks to broaden our discourse on

general issues and specific subject matters. We can no longer live in our own bubble. The involvement of various strategic partners as well as relevant stakeholders, in the recent retreat in March, is a clear testimony that all inputs that will assist us in achieving the foreign policy objective is welcomed.

7. Malaysia is also actively engaged in humanitarian diplomacy to reflect our commitment as a responsible nation state. Hence, peace, humanity, justice, and equality will remain as the core values in Malaysia's independent, principled, and pragmatic foreign policy. Therefore, I strongly believe our policy-making practices will always be guided by the criteria of Malaysia MADANI six core values; Sustainability, Prosperity, Innovation, Respect, Trust, and Compassion which will serve the country's best interests. In order to achieve these interests, I urge you, young officers to carry out your responsibilities abroad based on YB Foreign Minister's suggested 3B approach: bridging, building and binding. I am confident that these approaches would create a conducive working environment for you to identify forward moving and pragmatic methodologies to protect our interest and to project Malaysia as a country that provides a wide range of opportunities.

8. To the graduates, I have this to say: stay strong and stay true to the course. As Henry Kissinger once said, "Diplomacy isn't like engineering - solving problems as they present themselves, moving on to the next one - but more like gardening: cultivating relationships - not for their own sake, as critics of diplomacy claim – but so they can be called on when you need them." Therefore, turn every event into useful diplomatic engagement – every meal of the day, small talks, dinner talks or even official meetings – to

build a strong network with your fellow counterparts. You should always stand tall with the best.

9. I also encourage you to continuously upgrade yourselves: by gaining new knowledge and skills. You must always remember that a diplomat's responsibilities evolve far rapidly than any other profession. You have to be ahead of the game. This country needs diplomats who are visionary. This country needs diplomats who are alert. This country needs diplomats who are efficient. Hence, you are our eyes and ears abroad to furnish us with timely, accurate and good assessment reports. For example, the recent Sudan evacuation mission was successful because our officers from the Mission and Wisma Putra were ahead of the game in their planning and execution of the evacuation.

10. Young officers like you, must be tech-savvy. Information is a finger tap away. It is no doubt that these 21st-century skills - digital technology, artificial intelligence, and social media - have added value to our daily lives. Digital diplomacy is a crucial part of conducting our international relations. Therefore, you must gain momentum on your digital journey towards a holistic approach enroute digital diplomacy. Digital diplomacy increases the range, intensity, and effectiveness of transborder actions. However, let me remind you, there are two sides to every coin. You must be wary of the circumstances that may come along with digital engagement. As the flagbearers of the Malaysian diplomatic service, you must be capable, influential, and ethical to overcome the technological challenges that lie ahead in your diplomatic journey.

11. Harold Nicolson wrote after the Second World War, “The key qualities of a diplomat are truthfulness, precision, calmness and modesty.” I concur with this, even in the current age. The ideal diplomat must be able to; contrive anything, adapt, and adopt, and be surprised by nothing. What I mean here is, when you encounter any cultural peculiarities within a diplomatic setting, you must be able to act accordingly in line with our culture and religion, spark curiosity within you and seek understanding of that encounter. Only then, officers like you can be hailed as a skilful, astute, and cultured diplomat.

12. It is also important to remember that some of the most impactful learning opportunities can happen outside of formally constructed programmes and through daily workplace interactions between peers and seniors’ communication. The on-the-job learning experiences will allow officers like you to discover and utilise the tools you need for career growth at your own terms, while having access to guidance from more experienced and senior officers.

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

13. IDFR’s task – to develop human capital in anticipation of an unpredictable future – is unenviable. But this programme stands as testimony of how important it is to start from the very beginning – with our young officers so that they may develop into the well-rounded and dynamic foreign service officers that Malaysia needs. I trust that the four months programme has given each one of you an enriching experience, knowledge, and skills.

14. I hope that you keep on learning and embracing new knowledge and skills. Give your fullest commitment to the Ministry and execute your duties in protecting our country's national interest.

15. I would like to also take this opportunity to thank the spouses and family members of DiD 2022 for your unfaltering patience and support towards your loved ones as they embark on the journey of putting the national interest above all.

16. With that I would like to invite everyone to join me in congratulating the graduates of the Diploma in Diplomacy, Cohort 1 and 2, of 2022 on successfully completing this training programme.

Congratulations and well done!

Thank you.

Wabillahi Taufik Walhidayah

Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh