



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY
THE HONOURABLE TUN DR. MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD
PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA**

**AT THE SIDE-EVENT ON
ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP IN ADDRESSING POVERTY TO ACHIEVE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL
ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2019 (THURSDAY), AT 1.15PM
CONFERENCE ROOM 2, CONFERENCE BUILDING
UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK**

1. First and foremost, I wish to convey my appreciation to the organisers of this event. I would also like to express my gratitude to our counterparts from Turkey and Pakistan for their cooperation in materialising this event in support of our journey to balance our development needs while maintaining our environmental stewardship.
2. Since gaining Independence in 1957, Malaysia has successfully diversified its economy, from one that was initially commodity-based to that which is now more driven by robust manufacturing and services. Due to our consistent diversification policies in the last few decades, Malaysia is now no longer over dependent on any commodity, economic sector or export market.
3. The Malaysian economy expanded by 6.2 percent on average every year between 1971 and 2018 while our per capita income rose by more than 20 times, to reach about US\$9,300 in 2018. Equally important, our inflation rate has been stable and kept below 4 percent on average during the same period while enjoying full employment since 1992. Malaysia's development hallmark is that its growth is inclusive in nature, where our absolute poverty rate fell from about 50 percent of households in 1970 to a mere 0.4 percent in 2016, under the old poverty line.
4. Malaysia obtained these socio-economic achievements while managing and sustaining its resources. At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, as the Prime Minister back then, I made a pledge that Malaysia is committed to maintain at least 50 percent of our land mass under forest cover. Today, almost three decades later, I am proud to announce that we have not reneged on that pledge.
5. Malaysia's forest cover is currently at 55.3 percent or 18.3 million hectares of our total land area, exceeding Malaysia's initial commitment at the Rio Earth Summit. This represents the nation's will and commitment to conserve and sustainably manage our forest, its flora and fauna. Our forest cover today is even far higher than that of most large European countries including France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.
6. Today, despite Malaysia's economic growth and rapid urbanisation, maintaining its forests and making existing agricultural land more productive to meet increasing demand could not have been achieved without adopting pragmatic, progressive and sustainable development policies.
7. Various laws have been enacted, such as the Land Conservation Act, 1960; Wildlife Protection Act, 1972; and the National Forestry Act, 1984; all instrumental legislations that have provided the legal framework covering every aspect including land use, wildlife protection, administration and conservation of forest.

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8. Malaysia has also been blessed with oil and gas reserves. While we are not a significant crude oil producer compared with the US and Saudi Arabia, we are mindful about managing this finite resource and the perils of the Dutch disease. The National Depletion Policy, 1980, was instituted to safeguard the exploitation of Malaysia's natural oil reserves because of the rapid increase in the production of crude oil. Due to this policy, our crude oil production (minus condensates) is capped at about 600 barrels per day.
9. In pursuing our vision towards becoming a developed nation, we admit that we are facing an increasing pressure as we need to comply to various commitment under the multilateral environmental agreement and adhere to trade regulations such as labelling and standard to meet international specific environmental requirements.
10. For instance, in ensuring our natural resources-based product comply to international standard, we established the Malaysia Timber Certification Scheme to enable our timber product to be exported to the international markets. At the national level, the *MyHijau* Programme has been initiated to promote the sourcing and purchasing of green products and services in Malaysia.
11. Renewable energy has been given a renewed focus in Malaysia. We have set a target of 20 per cent electricity generation from renewable energy sources by 2025. Current incentives, such as the Green Technology Financing Scheme and the Green Investment Tax Allowance, will be continued to incentivise the growth of renewable energy.
12. Although Malaysia has put in place various efforts to prevent environmental loss, we still face challenges from our growing socio-economic development needs. The increasing population of Malaysia brings with it an increased demand for food, water and other infrastructures which places pressure on our natural resources and environment.
13. The impact of climate change further adds to this pressure. Extreme changes in rainfall patterns as well as extended dry spells affect our forests ability to store and produce fresh water, sea level rises that lead to peculiar flood incidents and pollution.
14. In the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020), substantial resources have been allocated to implement a wide range of actions to address climate change as well as to further enhance our conservation and restoration efforts.
15. We need to ensure the earth will be able to exist in its best form to provide the services and environment that humans need. Thus, we need to responsibly use and protect our natural resources and environment by conserving and do things sustainably.
16. This effort needs to be adopted by all people at all levels for us to succeed, especially in addressing the impact of climate change. We believe that the unsustainable use of natural resources and neglecting the environment, have much to do with these changes.
17. On the global front, Malaysia takes its commitment to conservation seriously and is proud to be a signatory to an extensive list of global treaties on conservation, wildlife, forestry and the environment.
18. Malaysia is party to various multilateral forest conservation-related conventions and agreements, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (RAMSAR) and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES). As party to these conventions, Malaysia is obliged to develop national strategies, plans and programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

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19. We also have ratified the Montreal Protocol since 1989 in supporting the global effort to reduce or eliminate the production and use of materials that contribute to the depletion of ozone. Malaysia has also ratified the Paris Agreement in 2016, and is committed to reduce 45 percent of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions intensity to gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030.
20. Malaysia sees these Multilateral Environmental Agreements as a key part of its formula for balance in the sense of its responsibility to the planet, its responsibility to its people to ensure their right to food, clothing and shelter, and balance in the right at its people to rise out of poverty, and to seek long-term, sustainable and shared prosperity for the country.

Thank you.