

Premier Think Tanks from Malaysia and the United States Present Recommendations on Malaysia-US Relations to Prime Minister YAB Dato' Sri Najib Tun Abdul Razak

KUALA LUMPUR, 10 November, 2011- Leading think tanks from Kuala Lumpur and Washington, DC delivered recommendations for taking Malaysia-US relations to a new level to Prime Minister YAB Dato' Sri Najib Tun Abdul Razak today in Putrajaya. The think tank leaders say that bilateral relations are at an all time high and this window to deepen ties should be seized by YAB Dato' Sri Najib and President Barack Obama.

Dato' Dr. Mahani Zainal Abidin, Chief Executive of the Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia and Ernest Bower, Senior Advisor and Director of the Southeast Asia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) presented the recommendations to YAB Dato' Sri Najib in his office in Putrajaya.

The recommendations are designed for the leaders of both governments to sustain and deepen the bilateral relationship. They include the following:

- Plan for President Obama to visit Malaysia in 2012 with a senior US business delegation;
- Create a high level bilateral strategic dialogue between the Malaysian and US governments including a Track Two channel featuring policy leaders;
- Expand military ties through enhanced integration, training and exchange programs of senior officers;
- Create a high level Competitiveness Council featuring top business leaders from both countries who would provide suggestions to enhance trade and investment;
- Develop specific pathfinder initiatives to exponentially expand science and technology cooperation including creating counterpart ties between leading Malaysian and US institutions;
- Create a joint cyber-security task force; and
- Invest in a Malaysia-US education foundation that would support the doubling of Malaysian students in the United States by 2020 and expand the number of US students studying in Malaysia.

The recommendations were presented to YAB Dato' Sri Najib ahead of his departure for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Hawaii and the East Asia Summit in Bali where he will meet President Obama.

CSIS' Datuk Ernie Bower said, "These recommendations are timely and designed to help the leaders of our countries seize this historic opportunity to deepen and institutionalize our bilateral ties. We haven't witnessed an opportunity like this for substantial and comprehensive alignment – so we are compelled to act now."

ISIS Malaysia's Dato' Dr. Mahani pointed out that, "While the United States and Malaysia share an important set of common goals and objectives, our study identified new opportunities for deeper cooperation that will transform the relationship in even more exciting and positive ways."

This seminal joint project between ISIS Malaysia and CSIS commenced in May 2011. The full report will be published in January 2012 entitled “From Strength to Empowerment: The Next Generation of US-Malaysia Relations,” and focuses on four key pillars in the bilateral relationship: political and security, trade and investment, science and technology, and socio-cultural and education. The recommendations presented today were the product of extensive consultations in Kuala Lumpur and Washington between various Malaysian and US stakeholders.

ISIS Malaysia and CSIS hope that the project and the recommendations will spur action and new initiatives to strengthen relations between Malaysia and the United States.

The Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia, Malaysia's premier think tank, was established on April 8, 1983. As an autonomous and nonprofit organization, ISIS Malaysia is engaged in objective and independent policy research. It also fosters dialogue and debate among the public sector, the private sector, and academia. ISIS Malaysia has been at the forefront of some of the most significant nation-building initiatives in Malaysia's history, including the Vision 2020 and the Knowledge-Based Economy Master Plan initiative.

CSIS is a bipartisan, nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, DC. CSIS conducts research and analysis and develops policy initiatives that look into the future and anticipate change. It provides strategic insights and policy solutions to decision makers in government, international institutions, the private sector, and civil society.