

BismillahirRahmanirRahim.

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and Good Morning.

Duli Yang Teramat Mulia
Raja Dr Nazrin Shah ibni Sultan Azlan Muhibbuddin Shah
His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Perak Darul Ridzuan

Tuan Yang Terutama
Dr Surin Pitsuwan
Secretary-General of ASEAN

Yang Berusaha
Mr Dang Dinh Quy
Chairman of ASEAN-ISIS

Yang Berbahagia

Tan Sri Mohamed Jawhar Hassan
Chairman of ISIS Malaysia

Yang Berbahagia
Dato' Dr Mahani Zainal Abidin
Chief Executive of ISIS Malaysia

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

1. I am delighted to be a part of the silver anniversary of the Asia-Pacific Roundtable. I thank the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN-ISIS) and the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia, in particular, for the kind invitation to officiate the Roundtable and address this distinguished ensemble of security experts and practitioners.

2. The Asia-Pacific Roundtable is a prime example of the crucial role of ASEAN-ISIS in bringing the region together for open and inclusive discussions on regional security issues and challenges. I congratulate ASEAN-ISIS for nurturing the Asia-Pacific Roundtable into the region's most successful Track 2 security conference. I am especially proud of the contributions made by ISIS Malaysia in convening the APR since 1987.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. This year marks the 40th anniversary of ASEAN's Declaration of ZOPFAN – the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality. ZOPFAN was first articulated during a turbulent period for the region. Even though it dates back to 1971, I find the core principles of ZOPFAN to be relevant to this day. Indeed, it continues to reflect ASEAN's approach towards the major powers. Guided by "equiproximity" – as opposed to equidistance – we continue to embrace and deepen our economic, cultural, political and security relations with our friends across the Asia Pacific.

4. At the same time, ZOPFAN reaffirms the imperative of moderating rivalries and preventing Southeast Asia from becoming an arena for major-power strategic competition. The management of our relations with the major powers is one of the most important strategic challenges that we face today, and there is much wisdom and practical insights that we can derive from this four-decades-old concept. ZOPFAN also underscored ASEAN's resolve to work together as a team, even in those formative years of the organisation. The process of formulating ZOPFAN was crucial towards cultivating habits of cooperation between ASEAN member states. The fruits of that early instance of collaboration are now evident across multiple categories, as we move closer towards an ASEAN Community.

5. In about four-and-a-half year's time, ASEAN will mark yet another milestone. Indeed, 2015 will be a watershed year when ASEAN will take stock of its community-building efforts. By all accounts, intra-regional trade has and will continue to grow. The movement of goods will be easier than in any time in history. The ASEAN Connectivity Master Plan will see the construction of the ASEAN Highway Network, which will build 38,400 kilometres of new roads. The Singapore Kunming Rail Link will improve rail transport by connecting the complex network of rail

lines across Southeast Asia. These are very important building blocks towards the realisation of the ASEAN Community. It is a development that I believe will significantly enhance Southeast Asia's economic growth and integration.

6. The last few months have been rather challenging for ASEAN. Tensions in the Cambodian-Thai border have caused a great deal of concern in the region, and this was evident during the recent ASEAN Summit in Jakarta. Despite initial hiccups and in true ASEAN spirit, both parties have agreed to refer the dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In seven hour's time, Cambodian and Thai advocates will begin to argue their cases in The Hague. I applaud the commitment by Bangkok and Phnom Penh to resolving the dispute peacefully.

7. The peaceful resolution of conflicts is the bedrock of ASEAN as embodied in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). Even when it may seem expedient to use force, ASEAN member states have taken the laborious path to peace and upholding the TAC. We must remain vigilant and reaffirm our commitment to this tradition. If ASEAN member states do not take the TAC seriously, we should not expect the other signatories to do so. We have a moral duty to lead by example and thereby binding signatories such as China, India, the European Union, Japan and the United States to their pledges on the non-use of force in the settlement of disputes.

Distinguished participants,

8. I am delighted that this year marks the 20th anniversary of ASEAN's dialogue relations with China. Our ties with China have grown from strength to strength as the region reaps the benefits of China's phenomenal economic growth. We recall with gratitude when Beijing refrained from devaluing the Yuan during the turbulent years of the Asian Financial Crisis of the late 1990s. A friend in need is a friend indeed, and China has proven to be a very good friend.

9. For some, China's rapid development has caused a certain degree of unease. The People's Liberation Army's efforts to modernise its equipment and doctrine have generated a great deal of discussion about China's growing strengths. But rather than speculating on Beijing's designs and intentions in the region, we would be better served by recognising the strategic adjustments that have to be made in accommodating China's re-emergence as a major power. At the same time, we hope that China will continue to be sensitive to regional concerns and employ its growing power and influence judiciously.

10. For the good part of the new millennium, China has walked the talk of "peaceful development" and has extended its hand in friendship to Southeast Asia. These are warmly reciprocated by the member states of ASEAN. China is now an integral part of regional cooperation and community building. I am confident that Beijing will not undermine this reservoir of goodwill and trust. Indeed, I am heartened that in the case of the South China Sea dispute, China has shown its willingness to work with ASEAN to formulate a Code of Conduct (COC). A binding and working COC will go a long way towards ensuring stability in the South China Sea. We hope that this momentum will lead to meaningful steps towards the resolution of the dispute. There is no better affirmation of the strong ties between ASEAN and China than a peaceful and expeditious resolution to our overlapping claims in the South China Sea.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

11. This October in Jakarta, the East Asia Summit will meet for the sixth time. Unlike previous Summits, however, we will see the participation of the presidents of Russia and the United States, bringing the number of countries in the EAS to 18. Malaysia, of course, has been a keen supporter of bringing Russia and the United States into the Summit. This is not because we wish to see its membership grow continuously and without end. On the contrary, we believe that it is crucial to be circumspect about any further expansion of the EAS. Our commitment towards an open regional architecture should not come at the expense of building an effective forum where participants can engage in meaningful dialogue. For issues to be given their due and fair consideration, we need to keep the membership of the EAS as lean as possible.

12. There is indeed much promise in the East Asia Summit. At the same time, however, we need to be realistic in our expectations for it. The EAS is still at its early stages – our work has only just started. And when it comes to grand strategic issues, which is what the EAS is all about, progress can only be made in small increments. Our patience and resolve will surely be put to the test from time to time. But we cannot afford to let frustrations get the better of us. The EAS calls for a long-term commitment, not periodic swings between enthusiasm and indifference. In other words, we need to keep our feet on the ground, and be prepared for the difficult work

ahead.

13. The expansion of the EAS seems to have renewed the debate about how it relates to the ASEAN Plus Three. Let me just reiterate that Malaysia does not view these two processes as being in competition with one another, that progress made in the APT somehow comes at the expense of the EAS or vice versa. Instead, we view them as being in a complementary relationship. This is a position that is shared by our ASEAN colleagues.

14. The ASEAN Plus Three will always be the primary vehicle towards realising the long-term aspiration of building an East Asian Community. It is simply unrealistic to cast aside the facts of geography when seeking to build such a community. Nor is it correct to conclude that an East Asian Community will be one that is exclusive and seeks to deny the interests of extra-regional countries. There is a clear momentum towards deeper cooperation between the countries of East Asia, driven by a growing regional consciousness. In this regard, I would like to underline my support for calls to convene an East Asia Vision Group II (EAVG II), which will formulate recommendations on the future trajectory of ASEAN Plus Three cooperation.

Distinguished Participants,

15. Southeast Asia views its security as being intimately linked with the wider region. That is why we have sought to develop an extensive network of cooperation. And that is why we put such great store in the ASEAN Plus Three and the East Asia Summit. I am confident that ASEAN's role at the centre of regional cooperation will continue grow in importance, especially as the world's strategic centre of gravity shifts towards Asia. It is therefore my hope that the Track 2 community will continue to contribute ideas towards solidifying the foundations that have been laid by ASEAN.

16. Allow me to once again congratulate and thank ASEAN-ISIS for providing this platform for regional engagement and discourse, a role that they have performed with excellence for over two decades. I wish you a productive round of deliberations and I am honoured to declare open the 25th Asia-Pacific Roundtable.

Thank you.

Wabillahitaufiq Walhidayah Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.