

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

Y.BHG. TAN SRI RASTAM MOHD ISA

CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC AND
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (ISIS) MALAYSIA

AT

THE SEMINAR AND LAUNCH OF BOOK "THE SUSTAINABILITY SHIFT:
REFASHIONING MALAYSIA'S FUTURE"

29TH NOVEMBER 2016 (TUESDAY) 9.45AM – 10.00AM

ATELIER 1, LEVEL 3, LE MERIDIEN PUTRAJAYA, IOI RESORT CITY,
PUTRAJAYA

Dr Hezri the author of the Book,

Dato' Steven Wong,

Tan Sri,

Datuk,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Distinguished guests and seminar participants.

As Chairman and Chief Executive of ISIS Malaysia I am pleased to speak in conjunction to the launch of the book written by Dr Hezri and the seminar that will follow afterwards to discuss the issues covered in the book. This book is written by a person renowned for his works on issues relating to sustainability and the environment.

I don't think I need to go further after hearing what Dato' Steven Wong and Datuk Dr Denison have said. Suffice for me to say that I am very happy that despite having left ISIS Malaysia, Dr Hezri has continued to be associated with our Institute as Visiting Fellow. I trust that he will continue to work with us on these issues.

Sustainability and sustainable development used to be two ideas and concepts that were discussed in the realm of politics, academics and policies. I spent quite sometimes dealing with these issues as well at the United Nations in New York. But for many years, the issues clearly lack the commitment, drive and urgency that were required to bring them forward towards providing real solutions to the problems faced by the world. Much of the inertia, I believe, had to do with the incisive pursuit of development, economic growth and unbridled consumption patterns.

Nowadays though, governments, the private sector and civil society are equally plugged into the various issues surrounding these concepts. The debate has been robust no doubt. It ranges from views and suggestions on the need to pursue sound policies to really achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals (the SDGs), to concerns over dismissive comments such as that climate change is nothing but a hoax.

It has been over the two decades since 1992 Rio Earth Summit was held. As we know, Malaysia played an active and key role in the summit and subsequent efforts to push forward the agenda at the multilateral level. Despite the vigorous discussion that had ensued since, advancing the

sustainable development agenda remains a major challenge and responsibility for all nations. Malaysia is not spared from those enormous challenges and I am glad that Dr Hezri is addressing these issues in this book.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The year 2015 was historic when the international community concluded three important watershed international negotiations. The first was the consensus achieved at the United Nations Third International Conference on Financing for Development held in Addis Ababa in July 2015. This was known as The Addis Ababa Action Agenda which provides the foundation to support the Post-2015 Agenda for implementing the global sustainable development goals.

This was followed closely by the historic agreements on sustainable development achieved in New York in September 2015. We all know about the SDGs. Against the background of a slowing global economy and other strategic challenges, the international community, however, agreed to adopt 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 indicators during the Summit that was held in New York in September 2015.

The SDGs should serve as a guide for implementing actions together and advancing the sustainability agenda. The emphasis is for the new goals to fully reflect the three dimensions of sustainable development. This approach calls for greater coordination nationally and internationally, whereby economic, environmental and social policies are designed and implemented in

a mutually reinforcing manner, allowing for nationally adopted and differentiated approaches for implementing what is seen as a common vision underpinned by collective responsibility.

In addition, we recall the negotiation at the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Climate Change Convention (COP21) concluded in December 2015, which resulted in what is now commonly known as the Paris Agreement. The Paris Agreement succeeded in extracting the pledge of 195 countries to limit global temperature rise to below 2°C.

The big question that remains is whether governments and businesses are prepared to put in place concrete responses to implement these far reaching visions and goals while worrying about more immediate challenges such as ensuring economic growth and maximum profit? The biggest challenge for all countries including Malaysia, I believe, seems to be the capacity to balance environment and development in a meaningful way beyond rhetoric and sloganeering? This is where the shift should take place like what Dr Hezri has argued before.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I think we all agree that there is already a strong sense of the need and requirement for a structural shift here in Malaysia. But a lot more needs to be done. The situation is witnessed by various efforts made by institutions and bodies in Malaysia to synergize and mutually amplify the international rules

and commitments with the national development agenda. Globally, the effective implementation of sustainable development objectives is an institutional challenge with which all governments are grappling. There are also new challenges and impediments on the horizon. Not least among them, is the increasing opposition to globalization which could throw a big spanner in the global pursuit of the SDGs.

Malaysia has responded to the environmental challenges much earlier than most other developing countries. We are among the earliest to adopt nature protection and pollution control legislation, beginning in the 1970s. Laws were put in place to regulate the industrial activities, rapid economic and land developments. While the law is adequate, the implementation and enforcement of such laws still require a lot of strengthening.

This book authored by Dr Hezri is the latest in this long tradition of encouraging discourse on issues that are important to the nation which has been developed in ISIS Malaysia. We are extremely grateful to the Prime Minister's Exchange Fellowship Programme, in particular its Chairman Y. Bhg. Tan Sri Abdul Rashid Hussain and the Board of Trustees for their support and encouragement for this project.

I believed what Dr Hezri has done here is to analyse Malaysia's experiences in finding a balance between environmental protection and economic development. It resonates with the challenges to prepare Malaysia to have a better sustainable future, as an economically and socially advanced nation.

Lessons from the past are important to frame policies, plans and programmes for a sustainable future and much of the work needs to be done now. With its incorporation of both theoretical and practical aspects of the sustainability ideas, I sincerely hope that this book will catalyse further national discourse on sustainable development.

It goes without saying that the sustainable development agenda is a crucial vision that needs to be pursued with passion, vigor and empathy to ensure a better future of our children and grandchildren.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I hereby officiate the seminar and the launch of the book *The Sustainability Shift - Refashioning Malaysia's Future* authored by Dr Hezri Adnan, Visiting Fellow of ISIS Malaysia.

I wish you have a fruitful deliberation. Thank you.