

## **Welcoming Remarks for the 10th International Conference: Peace and Prosperity in Muslim Majority Countries & Beyond**

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**5th September 2023**

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Distinguished guests and delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Islam and Liberty Network for graciously inviting me. Malaysia is honored to serve as the host nation for the third time, and it's indeed a moment of pride as we mark the 10th seminar since the inception of the Islam and Liberty Network roughly 12 years ago. In the same spirit, we had also just celebrated our 66th Merdeka or Independence Day last week and in 10 days, we will be celebrating 60th Malaysia Day.

The chosen theme for this conference – Peace and Prosperity in Muslim Majority Countries & Beyond – couldn't be more pertinent. The modern world, including Malaysia, is undergoing pivotal shifts. The discussions over the next three days will address a myriad of pressing issues that have arisen in recent years.

These challenges aren't exclusive to Muslim-majority countries with their varied political systems. They extend to well-established democracies and beyond. We're tasked with not just discussing these challenges but ideating on restoring political stability, global peace, economic prosperity, and the dignity of every individual. Only then can we ensure the overall well-being of all.

Being a Muslim, I deeply believe in our mission of 'rahmatan lil Alamin' – to be a mercy unto the worlds. It is our duty to embed this mission in the framework of our national and societal policies. And it's indeed an ideal foundation for our deliberations in the coming days.

However, before we dive deep into discussions, let's briefly address the elephant in the room. The Muslim world is rich in resources and cultural heritage. Yet, a significant portion of its population grapples with poverty, homelessness, and the scars of extremism, autocratic rules, corruption, and political instability. Many view democracy with skepticism, associating it with *taghut*, or transgression. Yet, democracy, in its purest sense, is merely a means to elect leaders.

Consider this: As of 2021, the Muslim-majority countries hold approximately 60% of the world's oil reserves and 50% of natural gas reserves. Yet, according to the UNDP, over 30% of the population in the Middle Eastern region, which is predominantly Muslim, live below the poverty line. Such stark disparities push us to introspect on the gap between our potential and our realities.

The path to becoming 'rahmatan lil Alamin' is fraught with challenges. Our journey is incomplete without ensuring access to quality healthcare and education for all, basic infrastructure like potable water, food, and housing.

In conclusion, as we gather here from ten different nations, I hope that beyond this seminar, you seize the opportunity to explore the vibrant city of Kuala Lumpur. Embrace the diverse cultures, foods, arts, and languages that our beautiful nation has to offer.

Once again, I extend a warm welcome to all delegates present today. Let's embark on this journey of introspection, understanding, and collaborative action.

Thank you.