



PARLIAMENT OF MALAYSIA

THE MALAYSIA SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP SUMMIT 2021 (MSLS)

Addressed by
His Excellency Datuk Azhar Azizan Harun
Speaker of The House of Representatives
Parliament of Malaysia

9th March 2021, 9.30 a.m.
Dewan Tun Hussein Onn, Level 2, Putra World Trade Centre,
Kuala Lumpur.

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh dan salam sejahtera.

[Salutations]

YB Dato' Sri Rohani Abdul Karim,
Member of Parliament for Batang Lupar and Chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary
Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals

Honourable Members of Parliament,

YBhg Tan Sri Michael Yeoh,
Organising Chairman of the Malaysia Sustainability Leadership Summit, President of
the KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific and the Chairman of PROHAM

Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria,
Head of the Secretariat for the APPGM on SDG and Co-Chair of the Malaysian
CSO-SDG Alliance

His Excellency Mr. Stefan Priesner
UN Resident Coordinator for Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei Darussalam

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

2. Greetings and a very warm welcome to everyone here at the Putra World Trade Centre for The Malaysia Sustainability Leadership Summit of 2021. It is my great honour and esteemed privilege to address this important Summit today. Afford me the opportunity to express my gratitude to Tan Sri Michael Yeoh and Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria for successfully organising this summit.
3. September 2015 was a landmark moment for International development as 193 Member States who attended the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in New York adopted a new global development framework termed: 'Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' The foundations of this agenda consisted of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or 'Global Goals' as they are popularly known, and 169 targets, which commit all signatory countries to tackle issues as diverse and deep-rooted as gender inequality, climate change, access to quality education and the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies.
4. While the SDGs are not legally binding, they represent a common imperative and collective will for action among the global community. As such, it is essential for Parliament to play a driving role in monitoring and supporting the SDG goals in Malaysia. The 2030 Agenda acknowledges the "essential role of national parliaments through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets, and their role in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our commitments". The targets of the Agenda reflect the understanding of accountable, inclusive, and effective institutions such as Parliament as crucial players towards successful implementation.
5. Parliaments are highlighted in the SDGs as part of a stand-alone goal that highlights the vital link between sustainable development and democratic governance. In monitoring and supporting the SDG goals on domestic and international levels, Parliament is rightfully identified and perfectly poised to carry out the role. Building on that, the institution has the privilege to align those goals with existing national policies and priorities that reconcile with opportunities for democratic engagement by citizens and civil society.

6. Three factors immediately come to mind that best explain the crucial role of Parliament with regards to the success of SDGs - the monitoring and strengthening of legislative implementation, facilitating greater public participation and the novelty of bipartisanship.
7. To the first, as a shared common goal, parliamentarians shoulder an important duty to observe the executive and its processes to ensure accountability, regardless of political affiliation. The 2030 agenda recognises that for delivery of the best outcome to the people, accountability and oversight of SDG implementations are of utmost importance. One of the mechanisms for this includes parliamentary committee oversight. Today, in the Parliament of Malaysia, we proudly have numerous standing committees along with the newly established Secretariat that houses 9 Special Select Committees.
8. Through these Select Committees, an accountable and in-depth scrutiny of policy and legislation takes place that will translate to recommendations for improvements of the implementations. This also provides for the opportunity for the government to produce draft laws before it is sent to Parliament for consideration, which would quicken the legislative process of law making. Committee enquiries have proven to not only be effective; it integrates public consultations on issues relating to SDGs. In turn, parliamentarians are afforded the chance to provide concrete recommendations to the government for the success of the Agenda objectives.
9. On the second factor of facilitating public participation, parliamentarians must be aided to enact higher quality laws and policies that resolve actual public issues that truly matter to the general population. Effective public engagements would be for the Members of Parliament to maintain active and accessible communication with the public to regularly reflect the sentiments of the constituencies.
10. The collaboration between Parliament and APPGM clearly achieves this. The local APPGM pilot projects at the 10 participating parliamentary constituencies

in seven states (including Kedah, Selangor, Pahang, Terengganu, Johor, Sabah and Sarawak)¹ have evidenced greater effective engagement between individual parliamentarians and their constituents on the daily as everyday citizens seek support for issues that are then brought forth to the government. In the efforts of the SDGs that bring about much needed aid and improvement to constituencies, parliamentarians have the opportunity to observe discrepancies that may arise with enacted laws and be offered real-time feedback from the public on the effects of implementation. In a diverse society with increasing disparities such as Malaysia, regular commentary that is honest grants a greater margin of error from enacting laws and policies that are out of touch with the times.

11. On the novelty of bipartisanship, working with representatives of local government and communities to develop a comprehensive plan for the future must be a valuable currency in good governance that should not be overlooked. The implementation of the SDGs should mean localised responses to communal issues rather than one-size-fits-all solutions born of political allegiances.

12. In this APPGM for sustainability agenda, we can confidently observe that wholehearted bipartisanship is the key and testament to achieving a common goal. Members of Parliament understood the necessity to prioritise the welfare of the people first – through compromise, consensus, and compassion. With the welfare of the people being placed at the heart of policies and priorities, it obligates for greater cooperation to face numerous challenges and solve the matters that truly matter. As Christopher Buckley once wisely expressed, “necessity is the mother of bipartisanship”.

13. Our common goal should be, in fact our duty is, to find a convergence point. Even if we travel on different routes, even opposite ones.

¹ From Jan to Dec 2020

14. Ladies and gentlemen, if we get this right at this watershed moment, we will have created a blueprint for other parliamentary efforts to bring the genesis of our democracy to matters at the forefront of our citizens. Setting aside political grievances, revolutionising the legislative process to include the will of the people as the title rather than a footnote of governance will soon change from a soundbite into a reality. The survival of Parliament until today is testament to the evolution and adaptability of the institution to the changing needs of the times by elegantly incorporating the modern, or different, to meet its objectives. The SDG agendas are a step in the right direction of the next chapter that will be definitive of Parliament's continued success and enduring legacy.

15. As such, given the incredible milestone success to date, I highly commend the APPGM, KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific and the Malaysian CSO-SDG Alliance for their fervent efforts in pushing the sustainability agenda forward.

16. I am inspired by the efforts thus far, hence why I am enthused to convey my unwavering support to this noble cause. As observed here, the partnership models work and there is limitless value in bipartisanship towards improving the lives of everyday Malaysians.

17. With this, I bid this Summit and its participating members the very best and continued success in their pursuits. I look forward to the many fruitful discussions ahead for all involved. *Terima kasih* and thank you.