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UN DAY 2017

REMARKS

BY

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FOR MALAYSIA, SINGAPORE & BRUNEI**

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KUALA LUMPUR



Yang Berhormat Datuk Seri Abdul Rahman Dahlan, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department;

Excellencies and members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Our partners from various Government ministries and agencies; the private sector; civil society; academia;

Our friends from the media;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Salam sejahtera and a warm welcome. It is a privilege for us as the UN Country Team, to celebrate the 72nd anniversary of the United Nations, with so many friends and partners of the system. This day truly belongs to all the peoples of 193 countries, to all of us here today.

Highlights of 2017 – UN Global

Ladies and Gentlemen,

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his address to the General Assembly last month, outlined seven threats facing our world today, which I will run through briefly:

- First, the nuclear peril. We live in threatening times and we need a united political solution on the strong foundations of multilateralism, and a re-energised commitment for a world without nuclear arms. In this regard, Malaysia should be proud that the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (or ICAN), a



movement that has won the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, was actually mooted by Malaysia's very own Datuk Dr Ronald McCoy, who deserves a resounding round of applause even though he was not able to join us today.

- The second is the global threat of terrorism, which has caused untold misery and fear across the world. It is important to understand the root causes, including radicalisation trends and exclusion patterns. We also, need to be vigilant against hatred and divisiveness, and actively promote moderation and tolerance.
- The third threat are unresolved conflicts and systematic violations of international humanitarian law. Not far from Malaysia, in Myanmar's Rakhine State, we recently witnessed the rapidly escalating crisis that resulted in more than half a million people being displaced over such short period of time. Millions more have been forcibly displaced from Syria and other countries. Related to this, is the issue of statelessness and therefore the lack of rights that requires concrete short-, medium-, and long-term solutions in every part of the world where it exists, and efforts to prevent it from happening in the first place. I would like to recognise the efforts of multiple actors, including from Malaysia in helping to meet the humanitarian, social and educational needs of refugees and stateless populations.
- The fourth threat pointed out by the Secretary General is climate change. We are experiencing these dramatic changes in our own lifetime. The number of national disasters that we face today is four times higher than in 1970. Our development has come at a price, and urgent action is needed. The good news is that there are solutions. Renewables have become cheaper, and evidence shows that green business is good business; this is why some economies are already taking transformational policy decisions, such as the phase out of combustion engines. Economies can still grow as emissions come down. Climate change action brings



with its opportunities of new markets and jobs, and trillions in economic output –

- Malaysia's own Green Technology Masterplan that was recently launched, projects 180 billion in revenue and 200,000 jobs, whilst reaping the benefits of a low carbon and resource-efficient economy.
- Fifth, rising inequality. With our efforts under the Millennium Development Goals and now the SDGs, more people have been raised out of poverty and the global middle class is larger than ever before. However, the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. And as history has taught us time and again - inequality and exclusion and the resulting alienation, frustration and instability, will inevitably become a price too high for us to pay.
- Sixth, the dark side of innovation. Technology and innovation are without doubt the most potent drivers of our progress today. But they do come with risks: cybersecurity, cyber war and the dark web to name a few; and emerging grey areas of ethics that need to be properly addressed, managed and regulated. As much as we are excited about the fourth industrial revolution and artificial intelligence, there is much debate on how it may impact and change the very fabric of our lives and society, employment, and global security. The huge challenge now is to make the best of science, technology and innovation work for people-centred development and the planet and to properly manage the risks they pose.
- The seventh, is human mobility, which the UN Secretary-General urges us to view not as a threat but as a challenge that needs to be managed properly. If managed well, it can bring us together for a more peaceful and equitable new world.

Solutions:

Ladies and gentlemen,

The threats are serious, but the solutions that have been developed are much bigger than



the threats. The world's largest multilateral and political platform, the United Nations - its charter, its grounding in "equal and inalienable rights", its international conventions and standards, its response instruments - are some of the most effective tools that we have in common and that are at our disposal.

And we are constantly learning from and improving these tools. Two years ago, 193 countries adopted the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. The 17 goals, 169 targets and 244 indicators, are unprecedented in its scope and ambition to improve the quality of life for all with no one left behind, and to ensure a planet that is sustainable and protected for present and future generations.

Highlights – UN Malaysia

But for this highly transformative and integrated global plan to work, it needs to be mainstreamed and implemented at the country level. And Honourable Minister, may I take this opportunity to congratulate the Economic Planning Unit in the Prime Minister's Department, under your purview, for having done just that, especially through the Eleventh Malaysia Plan and through the ongoing development of a National SDG Roadmap, which the UNCT has been happy to support.

We also congratulate Malaysia for its Voluntary National Review at the High-level Political Forum in New York this year, that was successfully presented by YB Minister Datuk Seri Rahman Dahlan. And by the end of this year, together with EPU and the Global Compact Network Malaysia, we hope to unveil a National SDG Portal to enable private sector, civil society, youth, government agencies and others to commit and track their contributions to the SDGs.



The UNCT also looks forward to supporting the localisation of SDGs at state-level; and accelerating achievements through the identification of bottlenecks and development of catalytic action plans; and the effective use of data for more effective progress measurement on the SDGs.

SDG progress is monitored globally by country on the UN statistics website and the Secretary-General issues an SDG Report every year. The key message in the SG's Report for this year, is one word – ACCELERATION. Because what the Report has revealed is that the rate of progress is far slower than needed to meet the targets by 2030.

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The SDGs are deliberately ambitious. Its highest and noblest of ambition is to leave no one behind. Malaysia, through its many well-crafted development plans and policies has made spectacular progress on eradicating hardcore poverty. The next challenge for most middle-income countries is to address the remaining and hard-to-reach pockets of poverty and vulnerabilities. The UN Country Team through the mandates and focus areas of its different agencies, supports the work of Government, civil society, private sector and others to target these groups. UNDP, has a focus on the Bottom 40 per cent; UNFPA on women and girls; UNICEF on children, particularly those who are differently abled and who suffer other types of vulnerabilities; UNHCR on the refugees and stateless; ILO on the migrant labour force; IOM on migrants and victims of human trafficking; and WHO on the health and well-being of all. We also have UN Women, UNAIDS, UNESCO and OHCHR who support us from their regional offices, complementing the work of the UNCT in Malaysia as we move toward Delivering as One.



While we, as different UN agencies, funds and programmes, have specific and complementary mandates, the UN system, as a whole, is undergoing major reformation under the leadership of our new Secretary- General, to make us fit for purpose and to deliver together on the one agenda, the 2030 Agenda.

In line with this, the UNCT in Malaysia, in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is in the process of developing a joint UN framework with clearly identifiable outcomes, building on the collective resources and comparative advantages of the UN family, toward a single purpose, the achievement of the SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sustainable Development

As we are all aware, the biggest challenge of the 21st century is SUSTAINABILITY. As I mentioned earlier in my speech, we are already witnessing and living through serious climatic changes, and the science is undisputable. Our dramatic social and economic advancement has been at the expense of the environment. It is a matter of intergenerational justice to balance economic growth with sustainable development – to ensure that the next generation has the same opportunities and quality of life as ours. In addition to the SDGs, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, backed by 194 countries, is critical to this end. And I commend Malaysia’s steadfastness in its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions intensity of GDP by 45 per cent by 2030 relative to 2005, as expressed under its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution.



Equally important with climate change is the protection and preservation of biodiversity. Malaysia is a hotbed for biodiversity. Picture this in your mind: just one hectare of your virgin tropical forest, a square of 100 by 100 metres, has more species of trees than the entire continent that I come from - Europe. Such a rich natural heritage is priceless not just to Malaysia but to the entire world. It is critical to the vitality and viability of ecosystems that support life – and must be preserved for generations to come. It is therefore, more than justified for global resources to be channelled to preserve the biodiversity of this beautiful country.

UNDP is heavily involved in energy and environment, and biodiversity protection in Malaysia. And our non-resident agencies such as UNIDO, UNEP, IAEA also work with their respective counterparts in the country on different areas of sustainable development.

Friends of the UN,

Human Rights

Human rights is the foundation of peace, security and development, and is key to the prevention of conflict. It continues to be a core component of our work, with Human Rights Up Front underpinning all of our work. Even in the 2030 Agenda, we see that SDG 16 brings together human rights, governance and peace as a prerequisite for development.

Malaysia's reaffirmation of commitment to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process; to furthering the promotion and protection of human rights for all peoples; and to supporting UN actors and mechanisms as well as SUHAKAM - for the protection and



promotion of Human Rights are therefore, important and very much welcomed. The UN Country Team stands ready to support Government in the realisation of its human rights pledges.

Cooperation

I would like to highlight the excellent cooperation that we, as the UN family, enjoy with all of you - Government, civil society, private sector, academia and others. And take this opportunity to thank Malaysia for hosting the UN system and YB Minister, the management of EPU and the International Cooperation and Management Services Sections for EPU's incredible efforts in helping us relocate to better premises. We also very much appreciate Government for generously hosting the UN global services centres of WHO, UNDP, UNU. And, the World Food Programme's – United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot that serves the whole of Asia and the UNU-International Institute for Global Health. In providing such support, Malaysia makes a significant contribution to help these organisations serve the world. We also very much appreciate the support of the international community in country, to the work of the UN system – many of you, who are here today. And last, but not least, I would like to thank all my colleagues in the UN agencies who with their expertise, dedication and hard work make up an efficient UN team in Malaysia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the words of the UN Secretary General *"We must act as one, because only together, as United Nations, can we fulfil the promise of the Charter and advance human dignity for all."* With these words, dear ladies and gentlemen may I ask us all, as 'we the peoples' to

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wish each other a “Very Happy UN Day” as we celebrate our joint 72nd anniversary.

Thank you.