

## **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**HON. DATO' SRI ISMAIL SABRI BIN YAAKOB  
MINISTER OF RURAL AND REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT, MALAYSIA**

**AT THE INAUGURATION SESSION OF THE  
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE (TC-31) MEETING OF  
CENTRE ON INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (CIRDAP)**

**PRIMEIRA HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR**

**23 MAY 2016, MONDAY  
TIME OF ARRIVAL : 10.00 AM**

Honourable Datuk Alexander Nanta Linggi; and  
Honourable Datuk Haji Ahmad Jazlan bin Yaakub  
Deputy Ministers of Rural and Regional Development, Malaysia

His Excellency Dr. Cecep Effendi  
Director General of CIRDAP

Members of CIRDAPs Technical Committee,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen.

1. On behalf of the Government of Malaysia, I wish to extend our most cordial and warmest welcome to all CIRDAP Technical Committee members to Kuala Lumpur. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our respected representatives of the member countries and distinguished delegates for attending this Technical Committee (TC-31) Meeting of Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP).

2. CIRDAP has been recognised as an international body in promoting integrated rural development programs and activities in the Asia and the Pacific region. At the same time, CIRDAP has been actively involved in poverty alleviation programs through people's participation in the development process.

3. We may come from different countries and different cultures, nevertheless our interests and problems are similar. All of us share a mutual interest to develop our rural areas and improve the standard of living of our rural population. We have the same vision to make rural areas

dynamic and progressive. In this regard, I sincerely hope that this meeting will bring us together to discuss and address common problems in agriculture and rural development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

4. Malaysia's GDP for the year 2015, grew 5.0 per cent with a value added stood at RM1,156.9 billion (USD287.830 billion) at current prices. The infrastructure facilities, such as the supply of electricity and water have reached 97.6% and 92.6% coverage respectively in 2014. Enrolment in primary education has reached 97.9%, while literacy rate for 2014 was 95.7%. Malaysia's development, growth and competitiveness as reflected in these figures are attributed by higher productivity, best management practices and good corporate governance.

5. The national agenda consistently prioritised the rural development and poverty eradications in Malaysia. Guided by these principles, the strategies and programs for rural development and poverty eradication have focused on increasing the productivity as well as improving the quality of life. These efforts, together with the continuous growth of the Malaysian economy have succeeded in creating job opportunities that leads to higher income in rural areas.

6. Today, I am pleased to share with you on our experience in transforming Malaysia's rural development to be more efficient, agile and effective. Malaysia has had a long and far reaching experience in developing its rural sector and bringing down the incidence of poverty from 58.7% in 1970 to 1.6% in 2014. Let me state that this was not an easy task for us to deliver but nevertheless we managed to succeed.

7. I have launched the "Rural Transformation Programme" with the theme "Rural Modernization" last November. The objective was to ensure the rural areas are provided with the

amenities and accessibility akin to urban standard. Every village in Malaysia will be connected via roads, 24 hours electricity and treated water by 2020.

8. The Rural Transformation Programme from 2016 till 2020 outlined six focus areas namely, Rural Infrastructure, Youth Development, Economy, Entrepreneurship, Human Capital and Delivery System. It comprises of 19 Transformation Programmes among others:

- (i) Techno-Hub – a market place targeted for youth to operate their high tech businesses in highly populated area;
- (ii) Mobilepreneur – which is ‘service-on-wheels’ where rural entrepreneurs are provided with specially-modified motorcycles to extend their services; and
- (iii) Rural Premium Outlet – Distribution and retail centre for premium rural products located in strategic areas with high purchasing power.

9. We believe entrepreneurship is the catalyst for the country’s economic growth. Entrepreneurship does more than just providing employment. It inspires new products and services that can change the ecosystem and support better standard of living for individual and community.

10. Focusing on rural entrepreneurs, we create local champions by providing business support and development. These local champions will inspire more entrepreneurs to conduct business in the rural areas. These activities will foster rural economic development which in turn will increase household income and enhance the well-being of the rural communities.

Ladies and gentleman,

11. Allow me to express my sincere appreciations to CIRDAP for the achievements accomplished since its inception. It has been 37 years and I believe CIRDAP has done a good job in promoting regional cooperation and information disseminations apart from organizing trainings, dialogues and seminars among CIRDAP member countries and its partners.

12. However, the challenges we are facing today is different from what we have encountered 37 years ago. As CIRDAP is approaching its 40th anniversary, it is an opportune moment to reflect on what has been done. CIRDAP, as an international organization can no longer be complacent within its comfort zone and should transform in order to remain relevant. CIRDAP has the advantage of full support of its member countries. Thus, CIRDAP needs to be more aggressive in performing its mandate for integrated rural development.

13. The members of this meeting should deliberate and come up with new programmes such as short courses which are low cost with high impact; or conduct Training of Trainers Programmes where CIRDAP involves the grass root level by training and grooming them to be extension agents. These 'agents' will later train and share their experiences towards producing more skilled and knowledged workers who are able to generate higher income. In this regards, the Ministry through Institute for Rural Advancement (INFRA) is willing to offer new training programmes related to leadership and ICT.

14. With a population of more than 2 billion across CIRDAP member countries, there are numerous opportunies in terms of business transactions. CIRDAP should become a networking platform for strategic activities such as gathering entrepreneurs to exchange views and explore opportunities available, particularly in terms of market access and untapped potential to expand their business.

Ladies and gentleman

15. I am aware of CIRDAP's current financial strength in performing its mandates. Therefore, I urge CIRDAP to consider engaging more cost effective measures in performing its functions so as to have greater impact towards its members and value for money. CIRDAP should also revisit and streamline their activities and programmes to meet up with the members' current challenges and needs.

17. Before concluding, I would like to thank all officials representing member countries of CIRDAP for your efforts to deliberate during this meeting. You might be facing some issues to be resolved, but I would like to assure you that my ministry and the Government of Malaysia will do our level best to make this gathering more meaningful.

18. Do enjoy and take some time out shopping and sightseeing in this vibrant city of Kuala Lumpur. Experience our local cuisines and the lush green of our beautiful golf courses and be sure to contribute to the Malaysian economy! I hope you will be able to mix work with a little bit of leisure. In that way you will very likely increase your productivity. I hope that your visit to Malaysia will bring you many fond memories.

19. I wish to thank Dr Cecep Effendi, the Director General of CIRDAP whose tenure will end in June 2016 for his excellent services for the past 4 years. We will definitely miss your presence and wish you all the best in your future undertakings.

20. I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt congratulations and thank all those who were involved in organizing this meeting. I would also like to thank the Secretariat for their tireless effort and everyone involved in making this meeting a successful one.

Ladies and gentleman,

21. With those words, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I hereby officiate the Technical Committee (TC-31) Meeting of Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP).

Thank you.