KEYNOTE SPEAKER OF iFUTURE 2024

YAB DATO' SERI DR. AHMAD ZAHID BIN HAMIDI

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

AND MINISTER OF RURAL REGIONAL

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10.30 a.m

Saturday

World Trade Center, Kuala Lumpur

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh dan Salam Sejahtera.

Salam Malaysia Madani and greetings everyone

(SALUTATION)

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed guests, and future leaders from around the world,

1. It is with great honour that I welcome you to the International Young Future Leaders Summit (iFUTURE 2024). We are privileged to host delegates from 50 nations, uniting both local and international future leaders under one roof.

2. This summit serves as a remarkable platform, bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds to exchange ideas, foster international cooperation, and cultivate the next generation of global leaders. Our aim is to empower young minds to tackle the pressing challenges of our time, create innovative solutions, and pave the way for a more inclusive and sustainable future.

3. Today, we live in what many call the Post-Normal Times - a period of constant and unpredictable change, where the idea of normal no longer holds. The world is becoming more

chaotic, complex, and full of contradictions, with change being the only constant.

4. In this uncertain environment, global communities face significant risks. Yet, this need not be our destiny. By embracing future literacy, we can find hope. As the world continues to change at a rapid pace, the demand for dynamic and visionary leadership has never been more urgent. As Mahatma Gandhi wisely said, 'The future depends on what you do today.

5. Standing before such remarkable young leaders, I am confident that iFUTURE serves as an ideal platform to engage in meaningful dialogue, exchange diverse perspectives, and collaborate on issues that transcend national borders. Through workshops, discussions, and networking, we aim to cultivate a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect among the leaders of tomorrow.

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. We are gathered here today for several important reasons. Foremost among them is the vital role of youth engagement in shaping our future. According to the United Nations, there are 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 years globally,

making up 16 percent of the world's population. In Malaysia, over 50 percent of voters are under the age of 40. This clearly illustrates the significant influence young people have in building and guiding our nation's future.

7. As young people increasingly demand more just, equitable, and progressive opportunities within their bubble, the urgency to address the complex challenges they face - such as access to healthcare, education, gender equality, and employment -has never been more compelling.

8. In an increasingly interconnected world, globalization offers us the invaluable ability to collaborate across cultural and national boundaries. This collaboration is not just beneficial - it is essential.

9. Like the Malay proverb said, "*Tak Kenal Maka Tak Cinta*" or in English: 'Not knowing is hence not loving, so knowing is loving'. Therefore, by knowing each other, we can have bettter understanding and long-term collaborations.

10. Secondly, this summit serves as a call to action, acknowledging that the voices and perspectives of the younger generation are crucial in tackling global challenges. The issues we face - such as climate change, conflicts in

Gaza, economic inequality, poverty, and technological disruption - demand innovative ideas and bold leadership.

11. This summit provides a platform for young leaders to step up, take responsibility, and start developing equitable, sustainable, and forward-thinking solutions. I encourage young leaders to embrace creativity and leadership skills to generate new ideas that address both current and future challenges.

Dear fellow aspiring leaders,

12. Reflecting on my journey, I recall my days as a young leader at university, where I was actively involved in student leadership activities. I have also started my political career by giving myself to help those in need.

13. My early experiences taught me the value of empathy, idealism, resilience, and vision. They helped me understand how complex governance can be and the power of working together.

14. From those beginnings, I've had the opportunity to serve my country in various roles, reaching my current position as Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the largest Malay party

in the country. My journey shows that with passion and perseverance, young leaders can achieve influential positions and make a real difference.

15. Looking at the talented young people here today, I see great potential. Young people are leading the way in innovation and change, both locally and globally.

16. The future is in the hands of young people, who will drive global change. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF) young people are not just facing the world's challenges - they are creating solutions. With nearly half of the world’s population under 30, their creativity and tech skills are crucial.

17. WEF also predicts that while automation may eliminate 85 million jobs by 2030, it will also create 97 million new jobs, requiring new skills. Investing in education and vocational training is essential to prepare youth for these roles. The world is depending on you. You are shaping your own future and the future of the world. The choices you make today will decide what tomorrow looks like.

Ladies and gentlemen,

18. I cannot stress enough the importance of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in our rapidly evolving society. I fully support Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim's commitment to advancing and strengthening TVET in Malaysia.

19. As he rightly noted, "We must refocus on technological and technical training, including TVET, which has been somewhat overlooked in the past. We need to excel in emerging research areas that are both challenging and new."

20. The need for skilled professionals is on the rise, and TVET provides the crucial training necessary to equip individuals with practical skills, in-depth knowledge, and opportunities for personal development.

21. As young leaders, you play a pivotal role in championing TVET as a respected and valuable pathway for career progression. By advocating for TVET, you can help reshape its image and highlight its critical role in meeting the demands of today's job market.

22. As the chairman of National TVET Council – our aim is to shift the perception that traditional academic education is the

only route to success. TVET offers equal importance and a wealth of opportunities across various industries and sectors.

23. As Steve Jobs once said, "*The only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work*." TVET provides a pathway for individuals to engage in meaningful work, build successful careers, and contribute significantly to their fields.

Dear future leaders,

24. We stand at the threshold of a transformative era. The future's direction rests firmly in your hands, not mine, nor that of the Higher Education Minister. Our role is to support and guide you in making informed decisions. The responsibility to shape the future is yours, and we are here to empower you in that pursuit.

25. Now, is the moment for you to rise and take charge. You are not merely participants; you are the architects of a new era. The ideas, collaborations, and solutions you develop here will have a lasting impact on the world and shape the course of future generations.

26. I urge you to take courageous and decisive steps. Do not merely engage in discussions about the problems - be

relentless in your pursuit of solutions. Challenge the existing norms, and become the leaders who redefine what is possible. Your commitment to action is crucial in overcoming the obstacles before us.

27. Let this summit ignite a global movement among youth -one grounded in innovation, justice, and sustainability. The world is observing, and the future is yours to mold. Embrace this challenge with right determination. Leave here not just with knowledge, but with a profound sense of purpose and a concrete plan to drive the changes our world needs. Your time is now - let us build together this country and world that reflects our highest aspirations.

28. In closing, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your active participation in this summit. Your presence here demonstrates your commitment to fostering change. I am confident that you will make significant contributions both to your respective countries and to the global community. Through your engagement in the discussions and activities at iFUTURE 2024, I trust you will gain invaluable insights and further hone your leadership skills.

29. Your passion and vision position you as crucial drivers of our future. I am certain that your efforts will lead to a more inclusive and promising world.

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

30. Thank you for your dedication, and I wish you a productive and inspiring experience at this summit.

Thank you.