



KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY

**HE TUN DATO' SERI UTAMA AHMAD FUZI BIN HAJI ABDUL RAZAK
YANG DI-PERTUA NEGERI OF THE STATE OF PENANG**

**OPENING CEREMONY CONSULAR CONFERENCE
THEMED "DIPLOMACY : CHALLENGES MOVING FORWARD"**

**5th NOVEMBER 2024 (TUESDAY) 9.30AM
BALLROOM 2, G HOTEL GURNEY, PENANG**

Bismillahirrahmanirahim

His Excellency Mr. Zhou Youbin

Consul General of the People's Republic of China
and Chairman Consular Corps of Penang,

Her Excellency Ms. Suratchaya Palavongse

Acting Consul General of Thailand,

YBhg Dato' Seri (Dr.) Haji Abdul Rafique Karim

Honorary Consul General of Pakistan
and Chairman Honorary Consular Corps Malaysia,

YBhg Dato' Shaik Ismail Allaudin

Honorary Consul of Bangladesh

and Secretary General of Honorary Consular Corps Malaysia,

YBhg Datuk Hamzah Ahmad

Chief Police Officer of Penang,

Honorary Consuls and Diplomats,

YBhg. Dato'-Dato', Datin-Datin,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

1. It gives me great pleasure to be invited to speak at this Consular Conference with the theme, "Diplomacy : Challenges Moving Forward" this morning.

2. I wish to commend the Honorary Consular Corps, Malaysia for taking this timely initiative to organise this Consular Conference in Penang.

3. As you are all aware, the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations provides for two categories of Consuls, namely Career Consuls and Honorary Consuls.

4. With respect to the situation in Malaysia, Career Consuls or Consul-Generals are those state officials appointed and posted by the sending States as an extension of their respective Missions, in cities other than the capital, Kuala Lumpur, while Honorary Consuls are mainly prominent Malaysians of different professional backgrounds, appointed by the countries concerned, with no emoluments or salary, to represent their interest in those cities and in Malaysia generally. But in Penang we also have Permanent Residents or non citizens who have stayed in the state for a fairly long time, appointed as Honorary Consuls to represent the countries concerned.

5. Although basically viewed as an extension of the Mission in Kuala Lumpur, Consul-Generals, Consuls and Honorary Consuls play an important complementary role in developing and enhancing bilateral relations between the country they represent and Malaysia.

6. In the context of global diplomacy, the pursuit of your role and conduct is indeed full of challenges. It is therefore useful for you to be knowledgeable and well informed of the big picture including the broad geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic landscape affecting bilateral and multilateral relations worldwide.

7. To be specific, it is useful that you have a clear understanding of the significance of the various regional conflicts, including in Gaza, Lebanon, Ukraine and Sudan, issues involving territorial claims in the South China Sea and other theatres of conflict, threats of terrorism, illegal immigration, problems associated with climate change and global warming, natural calamities of frequent forest fires, floods and earthquakes and global socio-economic inequality including challenges faced in achieving the UN SDG goals. To add to all these are problems of economic deprivation, unemployment, poverty, hunger and malnutrition, illiteracy and lack of educational and health facilities affecting developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

8. Against all these issues are what we see as the trend by the powers concerned towards adopting nationalist policies including trade protection through tariff hikes, creation of geostrategic blocks as a reflection of great power rivalry, and the perceived inability to work together in the spirit of multilateralism and multi-cooperation for the wider interest of the global community.

9. We also see the absence of global leadership by the super power and major powers that matter, and the pursuit of national interest on the basis of might over right rather than striving towards conflict resolution through negotiations to attain long term global peace, stability and security.

10. And we also see the rule of law being violated and trampled upon with impunity by the very advocates of such international legal system. And added to this is the selective application of the rule of law by those bent on committing genocide even in this modern age, as we witness the daily atrocities against the Palestinians in particular, and the hypocrisy and double standard displayed by their backers in justifying and defending such shameful and despicable conduct.

11. In the midst of all these, the UN as well as the ICJ and other relevant international bodies, for which the fate of the relatively weaker and poorer countries could be entrusted to achieve fairness and justice, appear completely helpless. The long standing UN veto system at the UNSC, with its inherent tyranny of the minority, makes it almost impossible for appropriate Resolutions to be approved and enforced for the benefit of the majority of the UN members.

12. In short, the world today seems to be trapped in permacrisis. All these certainly make for a gloomy global scenario, making the success, achievements and innovations attained by mankind in other fields including creative arts, science and technology, medicine, and outer space to be less pronounced. Indeed one can be forgiven for being utterly depressed and disillusioned.

Ladies and gentlemen,

13. Diplomacy, as an art of negotiations to resolve conflicts and to achieve amicable solutions to important global issues, has never been put to a greater test and under more serious challenge.

14. Developing countries like Malaysia has to navigate the delicate balance in the midst of contending powers within a multi-polar world, to protect its national interest, and to find its rightful place as a member of the international community.

15. In this regard, Malaysia's Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2025, has provided a window of opportunity to demonstrate its leadership, intellectual prowess as well as diplomatic, communication and negotiating skills to strengthen bilateral relations, resolve outstanding issues and promote closer collaboration to further enhance regional integration.

16. Malaysia can also play a positive role at the international level in contributing to the attainment of a global multi-polar system, guided by the rule of law, that is seen to be more fair and just in the interest of the broader members of the international community. I hope that the country will be able to meet the obligations and commitments placed upon the leadership during this most challenging period.

Ladies and gentlemen,

17. As a member of the UN, Malaysia has its own Consul-Generals, Consuls or Honorary Consuls appointed by the government of Malaysia in various capitals and cities overseas. Similarly there are more than 65 Consul-Generals, Consuls and Honorary Consuls based in Penang, Kuala Lumpur, Sabah and Sarawak.

18. Whilst Consul-Generals, Consuls and Honorary Consuls are not expected to be directly involved with resolving complex bilateral or multilateral issues on behalf of the government they represent, the supportive role that you can play within the mandate prescribed, should not be underestimated.

19. In the current age of economic and digital diplomacy, Consul-Generals, Consuls and Honorary Consuls, leveraging on their power of influence, local knowledge, deep understanding of local issues and extensive personal contacts locally, can contribute significantly to enhancing bilateral relations with Malaysia and with Penang in particular, in all fields, including trade, investment, tourism and culture, education and science and technology.

20. It is my sincere hope that, apart from fulfilling your role as required by protocol, all Consul-Generals, Consuls and Honorary Consuls will take a proactive approach in the pursuit of their responsibilities, with the degree of seriousness, diligence and hard work expected of them by the government they represent. Honorary Consuls in particular should be happy to be able to exercise your own initiative and discretion within the broad mandate given by the country concerned. I believe the opportunities that exist are almost limitless.

21. I look forward to seeing you continuing with your good work including pursuing fresh initiatives to achieve visible and tangible outcomes beneficial to both sides.

22. I also hope that the honour, respect, integrity and prestige associated with your post will continue to be preserved at all times in the conduct of your work and responsibilities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

23. I do understand that physical distance, financial constraints and difficulties associated with government priorities or policies may become impediments in the pursuit of your work. Even managing time in the midst of conflicting programmes and obligations can be a problem for those Honorary Consuls busy with their main profession. But a major test for all is the ability to find or create your own niche as to be useful and productive to your stakeholders.

24. The State government of Penang on its part will be happy to provide and facilitate whatever support and cooperation necessary in enabling you to fulfil your obligations and responsibilities. Let no impediments affect your enthusiasms for hard work and may all your contributions, big or small, be eventually crowned with success.

25. To conclude, I hope this Consular Conference could be made into an annual platform for productive engagements, discussions and exchange of views on relevant issues of mutual interest to all Consul-Generals, Consuls and Honorary Consuls, so as to enable you to better perform your work.

More importantly perhaps, and beyond being just a talk shop, I hope this Conference would be able to discuss and achieve a common plan of action covering specific programmes acceptable to all Honorary Consuls that could be implemented for the mutual benefit of Malaysia and the countries concerned.

26. With these words, I have great pleasure in declaring open the Consular Conference with the theme “Diplomacy : Challenges Moving Forward” and wishing all participants every success !

Thank you and,

Wabillahitaufik Walhidayah,

Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.