

VC: UMS ready for role in BIMP-EAGA

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KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is prepared to play an important role in assisting member countries in the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-The Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) grouping in achieving its objectives in numerous ways.

Its vice-chancellor, Professor Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah, said the role could be through an exchange of lecturers and students, conducting joint research and development, joint publications, collaborating conferences and seminar, especially in relation to forestry and marine resources.

"Other areas where we urgently need to combine our expertise in are tropical biology and conservation, marine science, fisheries, food security, marine resource management, biotechnology, sustainable tourism development and poverty eradication.

"UMS has the potential to become an excellent centre of reference for major topics and issues relating to the BIMP-EAGA grouping in the areas of sustainable tourism, bio-diversity, aqua-culture and poverty eradication, which is in



Masidi (centre) witnessing the exchange of the signed Letter of Intent between Harun (second left) and the representative of the Palawan State University.

line with the university's core research niches.

Harun said that at the BIMP-EAGA conference 2012, themed 'Enhancing Sustainability, Competitiveness and Innovation' at the Pacific Sutera Harbour yesterday.

The establishment of the BIMP-EAGA unit for Tourism Development (BE-UTD), said Harun, was officiated by former

president Fidel Ramos of The Philippines last year.

The unit is responsible for promoting inter and intra BIMP-EAGA tourism through research activities, capacity building, facilitating information exchange, promoting tourism investment and developing strategic partnerships between universities, non-Governmental organisations and tourism

stakeholders in the BIMP-EAGA region.

The recently-appointed vice-chancellor of UMS added, that the BIMP-EAGA's potential as an economic trade and investment zone has been recognised and is no longer an issue for debate. The sub-region within the ASEAN entity has a 'domestic' population of more than 60 million.

Harun said, BIMP-EAGA

presents itself as a very viable market.

"The availability of abundant natural resources gives it huge potential for tourism development, marine and agri-based industries, as well as varied levels of economic development.

"There are however numerous issues which need to be addressed in order to achieve its full potential and these include climate change, safety and security, poverty eradication, terrestrial and marine issues and infrastructure development.

"To address these challenges, the concepts of innovation and sustainability provides long-term solutions for the BIMP-EAGA region.

"Our ability to innovate is an essential component to increase not only the competitiveness of our economies, but also improving our quality life," he said, adding the goal highlights the strong social and environmental dimension in which innovation incorporates.

He expressed belief that it favours the capacity for growth while respecting the need to preserve natural assets and secure social cohesion.

According to Harun, sustainable development means meeting the

needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generation.

Sustainable activities, he said, should involve economic, social and environmental issues.

In the context of BIMP-EAGA, Harun asserted that resulting priorities would include combating climate change, ensuring sustainable transport, addressing demographic and social inclusion issues and managing responsibly of the natural resources.

The conference which was officiated by Tourism, Culture and Environmental Minister Datuk Masidi Manjun, saw UMS and the Palawan State University and UMS and the Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT), signing Letters of Intent towards formalising the relationship between the institutions in a bid to intensify joint researches and publications benefitting the BIMP-EAGA region.

The intended formalisation of relationship would stimulate and facilitate the exchange of ideas and findings among academicians and industry leaders to propel towards future collaborative efforts in ensuring sustainable development.