

Vice Chancellor Speech  
Regional Workshop for the Development of Course Programmes and  
Trainings for Protected Area Staff

Assalamualaikum, Salam Sejahtera and a very Good Morning, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, let me welcome all of you, SELAMAT DATANG to Malaysia, SELAMAT DATANG to Sabah, and SELAMAT DATANG to Universiti Malaysia. I am pleased to learn that participants from various institutions and countries are represented here to participate in this workshop, from Australia, Republic of Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, United Kingdom and of course, from our home country, Malaysia. I trust that you will enjoy your stay and please take sometimes to visit places of interests in the Land Below the Wind.

I am happy, honored and therefore appreciate the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) (based at Laguna, in the Philippines) for their confidence and trust to choose Universiti Malaysia Sabah as the venue for the Regional Workshop for the Development of Course Programmes and Trainings for Protected Area Staff. The university is also proud to see the cooperation and the development of working partnership between the Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ITBC) and the ACB, which I believe will be further extended into other countries. Countries that are represented in this workshop should become a very good start.

Ladies and gentlemen,

ITBC in particular and UMS in general have engaged in conservation activities and in various efforts that have been developed to see that the conservation and protection of biodiversity and natural habitats take place. From the onset of our inception as a university, biodiversity conservation is one of our main specializations that consequently led to the establishment of the Tropical Biology and Conservation Unit in 1996 and later upgraded into a full research institute as it is known now.

We have been working with various organizations both within Malaysia and outside Malaysia on conservation. Along the way we have developed

expertise in many fields. International experts and authorities in many fields have come and stayed at UMS, sharing their work and training out staff and students. I am happy to note that amongst the many undertakings that have been completed successfully involved the Danish Collaboration for Environmental Development (the DANCED project) and the Germany based GTZ (German Technical Association). Darwin Initiatives should not be forgotten as this UK based research fund contributor has been with us since 1996 until its 14<sup>th</sup> project at present. The American based SOS Rhino (now known as Borneo Rhino Association) fund deals mainly on the conservation efforts of the Sumatran rhino. World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF Sabah) has also funded one student to study the elephant.

Japan based organizations such as KOSINAR, ProNatura, NAGAO Natural Environment Foundation) and JICA have also playing their part in conservation efforts in ITBC. From 2003 to 2007, UMS was involved in a large conservation effort called the Bornean Biodiversity and Ecosystem Conservation (BBEC) Phase I – with many of our partners in the State, funded and technically assisted by the Japanese International Cooperation Assistance (JICA – now known as the New JICA). BBEC I was a huge project and has geared up many State and Federal Agencies in Sabah for a concentrated effort for biodiversity and ecosystem conservation. We have now entered the BBEC Phase II and one of the many objectives under this phase is to register the Kulamba Wildlife Reserve and the Lower Kinabatangan region as a RAMSAR Site – which, when completed, will become one of the largest RAMSAR site in the world.

Along the way, we have also received a lot of assistance from our partners, both in financial and technical terms, of which we are grateful.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

UMS was established in 1994 and we have enrolled our first batch of students in 1995. In our earlier days, we have always identified ourselves and a “young” university and had a lot to learn from others. There was no denying of the fact of the state we were until late 90s, but, as you would agree with me, you cannot stay young for too long! It is now the year 2008 and it is ending, too. However, we always find it necessary, even so much profitable to learn from others and also share out experience with others. I guess, this practice of giving and taking what are valuable between us is what makes ourselves and our institutions grow to greater heights.

I see this workshop, that is regional in nature, as yet another little steps that we are all making to ensure that the conservation of biodiversity and the protection of habitats, continue to be championed and remain close to our heart.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is not uncommon today, that we hear the society in general and the economists in particular, are talking about the monetary value of biodiversity. Earlier on, many believe that certain things that exist in our forests and seas are of no economic value and therefore can be replaced with economically important species. Progresses and disasters happened and we learned from these. Nowadays, we are seeing how forests are diminishing and suddenly the unseen economic value of the forests emerged. Carbon credit is the words of the day today when we start talking about forest value. I believe, not long after this, we will be able to talk about biodiversity credit with ease and we need to achieve this together.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before I end my speech, I would like to make a suggestion to all participants to take a look and enjoy the many aspects of diversity in Malaysia and Sabah. There are plenty of places worth visiting apart from the field sites you are going in the workshop.

With this spirit, I am indeed very moved by the efforts of the ACB, especially to it's Director, Dir Rodrigo Fuentes and his committee, in organising this workshop. Congratulations for your efforts and have a joyful and fruitful workshop.

With this remark, I declare this Regional Workshop for the Development of Course Programmes and Trainings for Protected Area Staff officially open.

Thank you.