

**Speech of Y.Bhg. Lt. Prof. Datuk Dr. Kamaruzaman Ampon
Vice Chancellor, Universiti Malaysia Sabah**

Official launching ceremony

***Annual Seminar on Marine Science & Aquaculture: Marine Ecosystems &
Aquaculture Practices in a Changing Climate
&
Centre for Collaborative Research in Aquaculture (UMS-Kinki University, Japan)***

**at
Universiti Malaysia Sabah
11 March 2009**

It gives me pleasure to be here today at the Annual Seminar on Marine Science & Aquaculture being organized by Borneo Marine Research Institute of Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

I am particularly obliged to YB Datuk Yahya Hussein, Minister of Agriculture & Food Industry, and Deputy Chief Minister of Sabah, for sparing time from his busy schedule to grace this occasion.

This year's seminar theme is very relevant and of contemporary interest inasmuch as it deals with the issues related to 'Marine Ecosystems and Aquaculture Practices in a Changing Climate'.

Both marine science and aquaculture are topics of great importance for our country that has a long coastline and a marine area that exceeds its land area, and where aquaculture is set to play an increasingly important role in bridging the gap between supply and demand.

Seafood is the product of ecosystem functioning. Decline in fisheries that provide seafood is a sign of ecosystem degradation. Obviously, it is important that we study impact of fisheries on the environment (including all levels of biodiversity) and the impact of the environment on fisheries, including the natural variability and climate change.

When wild populations of organisms of fisheries importance are depleted, it is inconceivable to expect the normal operation of evolutionary processes that favor the preservation and perpetuation of organisms resilient to environmental dynamics. A change that is brought to bear on community composition by intense fishing activity makes situation worse for populations that are unable to face the consequences of depletion and stress of climate change acting simultaneously.

Obviously, if environment has such a powerful impact on fisheries, we need to reorient our strategies. With the scientific evidence available now, some very logical conceptual scenarios can be derived to form a basis for new strategies. These strategies should be able to turn conceptual goals into operational objectives within reasonable timeframes.

Such a reorientation of strategies has become necessary because of the adverse effect of climate change on producing systems. As we all know that food security is a key issue these days. Although the objective of aquaculture thus far has been production of high

protein food which has not been a major food security issue but the perspective is now changing with the food crisis that the world has seen last year. Scientists now believe that aquatic crops will play an increasingly important role in qualitative as well as quantitative food security at global level.

Rapidly growing populations in Asia are increasing the gap between supply and demand for seafood. The growing prosperity in some Asian countries have also changed the dietary from a low cost predominantly carbohydrate diet to high value seafood. Aquaculture appears to be the food production activity which has the greatest potential to bridge this gap as capture fisheries decline due to overfishing and environmental degradation. However, developing aquaculture consistent with the criteria of ecologically sustainable management is a challenge.

Looking at the seminar brochure I understand that many of the pertinent issues that I just mentioned will be discussed among the scientists who have gathered here today. Topics of mutual interest will then link the scientists for a continued collaboration for a result-oriented research.

Ladies & gentlemen:

In addition to official opening of the annual seminar, there is another important activity planned by Borneo Marine Research Institute, which is the launching of the 'Centre for Collaborative Research in Aquaculture (UMS-Kinki University)'. It is a significant milestone in the progressive journey of Borneo Marine Research Institute. It all started in 1995 when UMS established a research unit named as Borneo Marine Research Unit which as a result of rapid development was transformed into a full-fledged research institute that it is today. Two research centers were created in the institute in the year 2007 for a highly focused research, and a third one is being incepted today. This center is different in the sense that it is jointly established by UMS and Kinki University, and is therefore has a more international perspective in its R & D goals.

This aquaculture centre represents the culmination of several years of a very productive partnership which has existed between UMS and Kinki University. We have seen in this partnership intense research collaboration, joint publications and conferences, staff and student exchange and technology transfer. Besides, under the auspices of this partnership we have joined the Global Centre of Excellence program with one staff and several students of UMS receiving scholarships to pursue PhD degree program of Kinki University.

Hopefully, the establishment of this center will take the aquaculture to another level that addresses the challenges of the present time.

The challenge requires the transformation of aquaculture from its aims of meeting short-term needs of food, employment and returns from investment, to a level that would see its transition to ecologically sustainable and integrated management. In short, I would like all the aquaculture and marine resources development concepts to consider ecological footprint which considers aquatic environment as a functioning ecosystem and its functionality to support human requirements of seafood.

A UMS-Kinki University centre bears witness to the vision of those who established and nurtured the relationship between the two institutions that has gone beyond the

traditional MoU and has matured to a stage that is taking the form of a more structured institutionalized arrangement that the centre represents. In this connection I must applaud the efforts of the first Vice-Chancellor of UMS, Y. Bhg. Tan Sri Prof. Datuk Seri Panglima Dr. Abu Hassan Othman and first Director of Borneo Marine Research Institute, Y. Berusaha Prof. Dr. Ridzwan A. Rahman, and their counterparts in Kinki University, namely Prof. Dr. Kiichiro Noda, Chancellor, and Prof. Dr. Megumu Munak, Vice-Chancellor, and also those who facilitated this linkage, namely Prof. Dr. Shigeharu Senoo and Prof. Dr. Hidemi Kumai.

Ladies & gentlemen:

I would like to end my speech here with all the good wishes for successful deliberations in this seminar and happy beginning for the aquaculture centre that will be launched today.

Thank you very much.