



KEMENTERIAN PERPADUAN NEGARA

**OFFICIATING ADDRESS FOR INTERNATIONAL
INTERFAITH PEACE CONFERENCE (IIPC) 2023**

BY

**YB DATUK AARON AGO DAGANG
MINISTER OF NATIONAL UNITY, MALAYSIA**

16th July 2023 (Sunday) | 9:45am

Furama Hotel Kuala Lumpur

SALUTATIONS

(Final salutation will be on the rostrum)

1. First and foremost, I would like to thank Allied Coordinating Council of Islamic NGOs Malaysia (ACCIN) for inviting me to officiate this year's **International Interfaith Peace Conference (IIPC)** with the theme of '**Working Together Towards A Respectful And Cohesive Society**'. It gives me great pleasure to join all of you this morning at the International Interfaith Peace Conference and Workshop (IIPC) organised in Malaysia.
2. Congratulations to the Allied Coordinating Council of Islamic NGOs Malaysia (ACCIN) and its collaborators who have successfully managed to bring together leaders and delegates from many local and international faith organisations to participate in this much needed effort for a second year in a row.
3. The inaugural IIPC in 2022 was also held in Malaysia focussing on the fundamental value of **compassion** in interacting with people of other faiths and ethnicities. International Interfaith Peace Conference 2022 - Kuala Lumpur resolved for the need for more sustained effort to

create dialogue of peace and harmony between the religious adherents.

4. This year's conference targets to build and establish a more respectful and cohesive society. This is in line with the **national unity policy of Malaysia which seeks to foster, strengthen and preserve unity** through specific strategies to make unity an integral part of culture and daily life. Malaysia has always been a melting pot of diverse ethnicities and cultures and is an appropriate place to host a conference of this nature.
5. This conference comes on the heels of yet another much publicised Quran burning incident in Sweden. Despite worldwide condemnation, incidents like these are becoming more common on the pretext of 'freedom of speech'. Only a concerted effort from religious and political leaders based on a commitment to the freedom of religion as well as **awareness and acceptance of differences can counter this dangerous trend which can easily escalate to an alarming level in the highly connected world we live in today.**
6. We are well aware that our societies are very diverse. While diversity is celebrated, we are also aware that division may

arise and, in some cases, give rise to conflicts. Being aware of the fault lines that could potentially disrupt the peace of our diverse region is important.

7. The plenary discussion topics '**Foundations for building respect and cohesion**' and '**How to build interfaith collaboration towards a cohesive Madani society**' are geared towards addressing the misunderstandings and challenges. It is also important to recognise that **sensitive issues and conflicts that arise in society must be addressed by the authorities in a fair and transparent manner to create an environment of trust.**
8. The topics to be discussed are in line with the aspiration of Malaysia MADANI inspired by the Honourable Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim which lays out the vision for a civilised, skilled and inclusive society based on the six core values which are sustainability, care and compassion, respect, innovation, prosperity and trust.
9. It is heartening to see a special focus on youth under the Youth Congress which forms a part of this conference. The **values of religious understanding, tolerance and respect need to be instilled from a young age** to achieve the objective of moving towards a respectful and cohesive

society. This can be achieved through the **education system and various programmes** which bring people of different faiths together.

10. Non-governmental organisations (NGO) by the youth and for the youth also plays significant roles in promoting peace and harmony. Yayasan Sukarelawan Siswa (YSS), a youth NGO under the Ministry of National Unity was established with the mission to promote national integration and unity among Malaysians through volunteerism and aspires to contribute to a peaceful world and nurture the spirit of camaraderie.
11. Although government have an important role such as policy formulation to ensure the success of efforts and supports the implementation of programmes to achieve the desired outcomes, input from various groups such as from the youth segment of the society are pertinent to decision making. We look forward to the active participation of youth in this conference and youth congress and welcome the proposal of ideas and recommendations which can be practically implemented for consideration. The Ministry encourages youth to contribute ideas and recommendations which can elevate the unity and harmony among Malaysian and countries with multicultural society.

12. Government must see these efforts as an investment rather than an expense by providing enough resources on a sustained basis. During the launching of the national-level Unity Week celebration in Kuching, Sarawak on 21 May 2023, the King of Malaysia Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah reminded everyone that unity should be regarded as a national asset for a better future of the country; Malaysians irrespective of race and faith must set aside their differences for the sake of the country which they all love; and that 'Unity begins at home'.

13. Managing unity is a crucial agenda and needs a comprehensive approach. In countries that have a diversity of races, religions and cultures, there are many issues and challenges that need to be dealt prudently. Today's conference provided a platform for us to share and discuss the challenges we faced and propose solutions. The similarities we share living in multicultural societies enable us to better understand the similar challenges we face mainly the challenges faced by people professing different faith.

14. The Ministry is prepared to look at the resolutions from this conference which can be a beneficial reference in policy development. It is hoped that more conferences and programmes of this nature can be organised both locally and internationally to spread the message of peace and harmony as widely as possible.

15. It gives me great pleasure to officiate the International Interfaith Peace Conference 2023. I wish all the panellists and delegates a highly enjoyable and fruitful discussion. Thank you.

Disediakan oleh:
Bahagian Perhubungan Masyarakat
Kementerian Perpaduan Negara
10 July 2023