



MINISTRY OF NATIONAL UNITY

SPECIAL KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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

**“STRENGTHENING NATIONAL UNITY & INTEGRATION
THROUGH BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS”**

NATIONAL UNITY SEMINAR

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CORUS HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR

SALUTATION

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President of the Senate, Parliament House Malaysia

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Chairman, Economic Club of Kuala Lumpur

Mr. H.H. Fong

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INTRODUCTION

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. As we gather here today to discuss the paramount importance of unity, I'd like to draw your attention to a phrase that embodies our collective aspirations: '*segulai sejalai.*' This phrase, rooted in the Iban language, beautifully aligns with our vision of unity as we strive towards the ideals of Malaysia Madani. I am honoured, as the Minister of National Unity, to champion such a powerful sentiment.

2. Today, I wish to spotlight an important ally in this journey: our businesses. Businesses, with their vast reach and influence, are more than just commercial entities. They have the capability to shape not only our economic trajectory but also the very soul and ethos of our nation.
3. I'd like to highlight three avenues through which businesses have been, and can continue to be, instrumental in bolstering national unity and integration.

INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE PRACTICES

Ladies and gentlemen,

4. Firstly, let's talk about Inclusive Workplace Practices. Every successful business, at its core, is powered by its people. In today's dynamic globalized world, diversity is not just a buzzword; it's an imperative. When a business actively fosters a diverse environment and ensures equal employment opportunities for all, it doesn't merely function efficiently – it flourishes. Such a business isn't solely driven by profit; it drives progress. It doesn't just welcome diversity; it becomes a tapestry of it.
5. Imagine entering a shop where every corridor resonates with our various languages and cultures, where every

meeting is a melting pot of perspectives, and where every project benefits from a rich array of experiences. That shop is not just an organization; it's an embodiment of national unity.

6. However, inclusivity should not be an initiative confined to hiring practices or team composition. It should radiate from the core ethos of the company, evident in its leadership. When we witness diversity at the helm, in the boardrooms, among the decision-makers – it sends a clear message. It demonstrates that the organization isn't just open to diversity; it champions it.
7. A diverse leadership not only brings a broader range of perspectives but also sets a powerful precedent for the entire industry. It tells every employee, irrespective of their background, that the sky's the limit for them in that organization.
8. Moreover, true inclusivity stretches beyond recruitment and leadership. It's about creating a culture where everyone feels at home. Celebrating various cultural, religious, and national events isn't just about acknowledging them; it's about immersing the entire organization in the festivities. It's an opportunity for learning, for bonding, for bridging divides.

9. It becomes a platform where stories are shared, traditions are explained, and myths are dispelled. It fosters an environment where everyone not only acknowledges the myriad cultures but also rejoices in their beauty and depth.
10. In essence, an inclusive workplace isn't just a place where diversity exists; it's where it thrives. It's a space where differences are not just tolerated but celebrated, where every individual, irrespective of their background, feels seen, heard, and valued.

STRATEGIC BUSINESS COLLABORATIONS

Ladies and gentlemen,

11. Moving on to the second pillar – Strategic Business Collaborations. In a world where globalization is the norm, businesses can no longer function in silos. Strategic collaborations pave the way for enterprises to tap into new markets, harness innovative solutions, and drive synergistic growth. However, what's profound about genuine partnerships that span across racial and ethnic divides is that they symbolize much more than just a business strategy. They embody the very essence of unity in diversity.

12. When two or more businesses from diverse backgrounds unite, it's a confluence of cultures, ideologies, and practices. It's like an orchestra where different instruments come together, each contributing its unique sound, producing a symphony that's richer and more harmonious than any solo performance. Such partnerships are not merely about profit margins or market shares; they become beacons of hope, showing that when we collaborate across divides, we achieve outcomes that are not only economically superior but socially transformative.
13. Consider the power of inclusive branding. In today's consumer-driven landscape, branding isn't just about selling a product; it's about narrating a story, sharing values, and building trust. When a brand resonates with a universal message, when it appeals to the hearts of a diverse populace, it goes beyond being just a business; it becomes a movement. It sends out a message that says, "We see you, we understand you, and we are one with you."
14. Now, let's shift our gaze to the backbone of any business – its supply chain. A diversified supply chain is more than just a logistical strategy; it's a commitment to inclusivity. It's a pledge that says every entrepreneur, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, or background, has an equal shot at

contributing and benefiting. It's about recognizing that the strength of a chain is not determined by its strongest link but by the harmony and unity of its every component.

15. In sum, strategic business collaborations, when approached with a lens of inclusivity, do more than just amplify business metrics. They weave together the threads of unity, understanding, and shared prosperity, sending a clarion call that reverberates with the ethos of togetherness.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

Ladies and gentlemen,

16. Lastly, I want to stress upon Community Engagement and Corporate Responsibility. In today's interconnected world, businesses are recognized not just by their balance sheets, but by their contributions to society, the environment, and their governance practices. The growing emphasis on ESG criteria is a testament to this shift. Businesses are more than profit-generating entities; they are pillars of the societal fabric, with the power and responsibility to shape a sustainable and inclusive future.

17. In line with the ESG criteria, our commitment to societal progress is deeply interconnected with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One of the most pivotal SDGs is Goal 17, which advocates for partnerships to achieve these objectives. Through collaborative CSR initiatives aimed at promoting national unity and integration, we are actively contributing to this global vision. Our endeavours go beyond local impact; they resonate with global aspirations of unity, peace, and inclusive progress.
18. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is no longer a mere auxiliary effort. It's intertwined with our core business strategies, reflecting our dedication to environmental conservation, social equity, and transparent governance. By aligning our CSR initiatives with the goals of promoting national unity and integrating them with the broader SDG objectives, we ensure our actions are both locally relevant and globally resonant.
19. Imagine the profound impact when a business, with its vast resources, expertise, and platforms, leverages ESG criteria to advocate for unity. By sponsoring events that underscore these ideals, creating educational programs that encourage cross-cultural understanding, and championing media campaigns that celebrate unity in diversity, businesses can

drive transformative change. They can set the gold standard for sustainable, responsible, and inclusive operations.

20. Businesses in Malaysia can foster meaningful community support and engagement by strategically collaborating with the Ministry and through CSR initiatives aligned with the ministry's goals, companies can contribute to Malaysia's harmonious multicultural society.
21. There are various initiatives under the Ministry at the community level such as Kebuniti, Tuisyen Kami, Jiran Muda, RT Cares etc. Strategic collaborations can involve sponsoring cultural exchange events, supporting programs that bridge cultural divides, or promoting inclusive education through funding or scholarship through programs under the Tunku Abdul Rahman Foundation (YTAR).
22. These efforts not only strengthen community bonds but also enhance a company's reputation for promoting social harmony and unity. Active community engagement, guided by the ministry's initiatives, allows businesses to actively involve themselves in local communities, address societal issues, and build long-lasting relationships. In Malaysia, where diverse communities coexist, these collaborative

efforts can create a positive impact and contribute to a more united and inclusive society.

23. To sum up, the fusion of community engagement, corporate responsibility, ESG, and SDGs presents a holistic approach for businesses. It's a roadmap to not just commercial success, but to a future where businesses are catalysts for unity, sustainability, and global progress.

CALL TO ACTION

Ladies and gentlemen,

24. In conclusion, let's not walk this path of unity and integration alone. Every business, with its vast capabilities and influence, holds the power to be a beacon of change. I urge the business community to harness this potential, adopting inclusive strategies, forging genuine partnerships, and dedicating themselves to the collective good. Together, we can and will build a brighter, harmonious future for our cherished nation. Let's take action, now.

Thank you.