



MINISTRY OF NATIONAL UNITY

OFFICIATING SPEECH

**BY
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FOR

**INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER COOPERATION
ORGANISATIONS CONFERENCE (IVCO) OPENING
CEREMONY & WELCOME RECEPTION**

22 OCTOBER 2023 (SUNDAY)

8.00 PM

GRAND BALLROOM, ALOFT HOTEL KL SENTRAL

SALUTATIONS

*Provided ** separately*

Salam Perpaduan and Salam Malaysia MADANI.

WELCOMING REMARKS

1. Welcome to the beautiful and diverse nation of Malaysia. As we gather here today, I would like to extend my warmest greetings to you in the languages of this great nation. In Malay we say “Selamat Datang”, in Mandarin, we say “Huān yíng (欢迎)”, in Iban “Selamat datai” and in Tamil “Varavēṛpu (வரவவற்பு)”.
2. This rich tapestry of languages and cultures is what makes Malaysia truly unique and welcoming, echoing our national slogan “**Malaysia Truly Asia**”. We are honored to have you here as we celebrate the power of volunteerism and this incredible conference hosted by Yayasan Sukarelawan Siswa and The International Forum for Volunteering in Development (Forum).

3. Our gathering today brings together **178** participants from **51** different countries, and for the first time, Malaysia plays host to such an event. We are honored to have you here in Kuala Lumpur to discuss the pressing issues in the field of volunteering and to unite agency leaders and representatives from organizations dedicated to the advancement of volunteerism.

PROMOTING VOLUNTEERISM

4. Volunteerism strengthens civic engagement, safeguards social inclusion, deepens solidarity, and solidifies ownership of development results. Importantly, volunteering has a ripple effect as it inspires others and contributes to the transformative changes required for the Sustainable Developments Goal 2030 (SDGs) to take root in communities.
5. I would like to once again call upon again on all countries worldwide to adopt the consensus reached by the UN General Assembly in November 2015. This consensus recognizes volunteering as a powerful means of implementing the SDGs and where The Plan of Action 2016-2030 aims to:

- Strengthen people's ownership of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda through enhanced civic engagement and enabling environments for citizen action;
- Integrate volunteerism into national and global implementation efforts; and
- Measure volunteerism to contribute to a holistic understanding of the engagement of people and their well-being and be part of the monitoring of the SDGs

6. The selection of YSS as the host for this conference is an exemplification of our commitment to promoting volunteerism, particularly among our youths. Our achievements listed in the **ASEAN Work Plan on Youth 2021–2025** and the **ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2021–2025** highlight the progress we've made in the realm of volunteerism. Malaysia stands ready to contribute to the global discussion on this vital subject. It demonstrates our commitment to the cause and our capacity to bring together a diverse and international group of experts.

7. It also illustrates Malaysia's successful model of preserving the rights of diverse communities within a harmonious framework. Malaysia is not only a place where diversity thrives but also a country that actively supports and promotes volunteerism, creating a lasting impact.

8. Additionally, I can proudly announce that Malaysia stands as one of the best models of a volunteerism hub in the region. Currently, there are numerous volunteerism organizations or initiatives under various ministries in Malaysia, such as:

- **Yayasan Sukarelawan Siswa**
- **Jiran Muda under Kawasan Rukun Tetangga**
- **Malaysian International Volunteering Program (MyCorps)**
- **IMPACT Malaysia**
- **Rakan Muda**
- **Skwad Sukarelawan Anak Malaysia (Satria)**

9. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on the voluntary sector, showcasing the critical role of volunteerism in global and local communities. Volunteers swiftly responded to the crisis, providing essential services,

support for the vulnerable, and ensuring that **no one was left behind** during lockdowns. In mass vaccination efforts, volunteers played a vital role in setting up centers, informing the public, and addressing mental health challenges through virtual counseling and support groups.

10. For example, **the role of youths in the Malaysia Vaccine Support Volunteers (MyVAC) programme was crucial to help make the National Covid-19 Immunization Programme a success.** Youth volunteers were liaison agents to assist in the registration for immunization as well as acting as logistics and psychological support assistants to vaccine recipients. The involvement of youths in MyVAC shows the continuing empowerment of youths in the country in the fight against the spread of the disease.

Ladies and gentlemen,

RELEVANCE/LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE OF IVCO 2023

11. Therefore, as a wakeup call, along with the focus on youth employability and entrepreneurship in the context of “Malaysia MADANI” we certainly found relevancy in IVCO Conference

2023 towards our local significance. Malaysia has a rich tradition of volunteerism deeply ingrained in its collective habits, shaping both individuals and communities.

12. It indirectly promotes universal harmony, aligning perfectly with the broader 'Malaysia MADANI' framework. 'Malaysia MADANI' endorses principles like the International Labor Organization's Decent Work Agenda, advocating for productive work conditions with freedom, equality, security, and human dignity.
13. Fundamentally, Malaysia's strong tradition of volunteerism, coupled with its unwavering commitment to the concept “Ihsan” highlights the critical importance of holistic development and the role that volunteering plays in empowering our youth for a brighter future.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY OF VOLUNTEERISM

14. The Ministry of National Unity in Malaysia plays a vital role in **promoting unity in volunteerism** through inclusive initiatives. It organizes events and programs that encourage cultural exchange among volunteers, fostering understanding across diverse backgrounds and strengthening social cohesion.

15. The Malaysia Government continues to encourage and appreciate the contributions of volunteers as reflected in Budget 2024, where the government will provide an **incentive of RM500 to youths who participate in volunteerism activities** with government-recognized bodies.

16. To echo this commitment, **the Ministry of National Unity will recognize all volunteers under Yayasan Sukarelawan Siswa as Unity Ambassadors starting from next year.** It's not just recognition but in action, to harness the power of volunteerism for a better, more harmonious communities in grassroot level.

17. At present, the **State Governments of Selangor and Johor have already implemented the Unity Ambassador initiative among the youth.** The Youth Unity Ambassadors play a crucial role in mitigating religious and ethnic tensions within the local community. They can achieve this by creating an inclusive environment and fostering connections that bridge background differences, all through their field projects.

18. Volunteering Development is a dynamic, ever evolving field, with new ideas ideas and challenges emerging in volunteering management. As the way forward for Yayasan Sukarelawan Siswa in 2024, I urge to:

- Establish **Volunteering Labs** to adapt, create, experiment and test new volunteering initiatives that effectively respond to humanitarian needs.
- Build a comprehensive **Volunteering map of activities** and projects that showcases the humanitarian initiatives, activities and projects undertaken by volunteers throughout the country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

CONCLUSION

19. To end my speech, I would like to express our heartfelt appreciation for the invaluable insights, dedication, and shared vision of unity and volunteerism that have been showcased here today. It is with great anticipation and enthusiasm that we look forward to the forthcoming session, "The Kuala Lumpur

Call for Action" at IVCO 2023. This is where the seeds of inspiration sown today will take root and grow into tangible, transformative actions.

20. We aspire for the objectives of IVCO 2023 to become a reality, as volunteerism continues to serve as a force for good, empowering individuals and communities alike. **May it serve as a catalyst for change, an instrument of unity, and a bridge across the divides that sometimes separate us.**
21. Together, let's ensure that IVCO KL 2023 becomes a resounding success that resonates far beyond the conference walls. Let's work hand in hand to make the world a better place through the enduring spirit of volunteerism.

Again, Selamat Datang ke Malaysia!