



KEMENTERIAN PERPADUAN NEGARA

SPEECH

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

**INTERNATIONAL INTERFAITH PEACE CONFERENCE
(IIPC) 2024**

**30 NOVEMBER 2024 (SATURDAY)
8.30 AM**

HOTEL FURAMA KUALA LUMPUR

Salam Perpaduan dan Salam Malaysia MADANI.

SALUTION

**will be given separately*

INTRODUCTION

1. It is my honor to address you at the third consecutive **International Interfaith Peace Conference (IIPC)** organized by **Allied Coordinating Committee of Islamic NGOs (ACCIN)**. I am privileged to officiate this event for the second time, embracing the theme: **“Essentiality of Building Bridges through Interaction & Dialogue for a Harmonious Society.”**
2. My heartfelt congratulations to the organizer for successfully convening leaders and followers of diverse faiths from around the globe to engage in this critical dialogue amid a world rife with challenges.
3. **The pursuit of understanding between different faiths and cultures begins with respectful interaction and dialogue.** The International Interfaith Peace Conference (IIPC) serves as a vital platform for enhancing our knowledge and appreciation of one another's beliefs and practices.

Ladies and gentlemen,

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL UNITY'S INITIATIVES

4. Diversity, a historical legacy of Malaysia's societal fabric, warrants celebration and preservation for fostering unity and harmony. **Despite the challenges diversity presents in strengthening unity, when managed effectively, it becomes the nation's strength, shaping a harmonious and united Malaysian society.**
5. Early this year, Ministry of National Unity launched the **MADANI Harmony Initiative** aimed at enhancing Malaysians' understanding of the country's religious, cultural, and customs diversity.
6. This initiative centered on **the core principles of national integration which are Understanding, Respect, and Acceptance** that aims to uphold a culture of harmony among communities. In fostering this understanding, we can build greater trust and ensure that our rich diversity does not hinder our aspirations for harmonious coexistence.

7. Among the programmes the ministry rolled out was the **“Jejak Harmoni”** initiative which saw the adherents of the various faiths gather to interact and visit each other’s places of worship. Ministry of National Unity also organised the **World Interfaith Harmony Week, Harmony Dialogue, Harmony Documentary, Harmony Podcast, and International Day of Tolerance.**
8. Next year, the ministry intends to zoom in on producing **advertisements for the various festivals, host a podcast on unity, set up a committee to manage issues related to unity and review the Community Tension Index (IKM) as well as continue its research on a module to foster unity in Peninsular Malaysia.**
9. Malaysia, under the auspices of the Ministry of National Unity, is committed to exemplifying a multi-faith, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural society, not only in Southeast Asia but globally. To this end, a National Unity Policy has been implemented to promote and preserve unity through targeted strategies, embedding it into the fabric of our culture and daily life.

Ladies and gentlemen,

BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH INTERACTION

10. At the core of this vision lies the powerful duo of **interaction and dialogue** two tools capable of bridging divides, fostering understanding, and uniting us as one.
11. **Interaction is the thread that weaves together the diverse tapestry of our society.** Every conversation, collaboration, and shared experience allows us to break down stereotypes, celebrate our differences, and find our common humanity. **Dialogue, on the other hand, is the medium through which we articulate our values, resolve conflicts, and chart a path toward collective progress.**
12. **One of the most significant barriers to meaningful interaction is polarization.** In recent times, societal divisions have been exacerbated by misinformation, prejudice, and a lack of understanding of one another's lived experiences. Many people hesitate to engage in dialogue due to fear of judgment or rejection.

13. While technology has brought us closer, it has also created echo chambers where individuals interact only with those who share their beliefs. This stifles diverse perspectives and deepens societal divides. Moreover, **digital divides leave marginalized communities without access to these platforms, further isolating them from meaningful discourse.** Addressing these challenges requires us to promote digital literacy and encourage dialogue that transcends the virtual world into real-life interactions.
14. While the challenges are real, they are not insurmountable. To overcome them, we must adopt a proactive approach and implement strategies that empower **interaction and dialogue. In a harmonious society, these two elements serve as the foundation.** They enable us to appreciate diversity, address misunderstandings, and unite in pursuit of common goals. Without interaction and dialogue, mistrust festers, conflicts escalate, and opportunities for unity diminish.
15. **True harmony is not the absence of differences; it is the ability to embrace and celebrate them while working together for the common good.** It is a society

where no one feels left out, where dialogue becomes a way of life, and where interactions transcend superficial boundaries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

CLOSING

16. As the Minister of National Unity, **I pledge to intensify efforts toward building bridges across our communities.** This is not a task for the government alone. It is a shared responsibility that requires every citizen, every community, and every organization to play their part.

17. **We must remember that unity does not mean uniformity. It means standing together despite our differences and striving for a future that is inclusive and equitable.** Together, through intentional interactions and meaningful dialogue, we can build a society that is not just cohesive but truly harmonious.

18. With great pleasure that **I hereby officially inaugurate the International Interfaith Peace Conference (IIPC) 2024.** Thank you, and let us continue this journey toward unity with unwavering determination.