

**WELCOMING ADDRESS BY
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MU'IZZADDIN WADDAULAH SULTAN AND YANG
DI-PERTUAN OF NEGARA BRUNEI DARUSSALAM
TO REPRESENTATIVES AT THE FIFTEENTH MEETING
OF THE PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION COUNCIL**

**PECC XV – BRUNEI DARUSSALAM
1 – 3 SEPTEMBER 2003**

Your Excellencies,
Members of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me very great pleasure indeed to welcome you all to Brunei Darussalam.

The P.E.C.C General Meeting you are gathered for is the highlight of our chairmanship of the Council of the past two years. I would like to congratulate the committee on their planning, organization and arrangements to receive you all. Our people are deeply honoured to be hosting such a distinguished gathering of regional and world authorities.

In the next few days, we will also be joined by my fellow leaders from South East Asia; President Arroyo, Prime Minister Thaksin and Deputy Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi.

In joining us, they reflect the commitment of all my colleagues in ASEAN to regional solidarity and to the spirit of international cooperation represented by the PECC.

As we in Brunei Darussalam saw at APEC 2000, this spirit is also shared right across the Asia-Pacific region. It is one that encourages us to believe in a future that offers real hope. It is therefore a privilege to welcome you to our country and, on behalf of all our people, I offer our warmest greetings to you all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Council was set up over twenty years ago. It represents almost a generation of leaders from right across the economic spectrum, from academic authorities to analysts and from business executives to political leaders. It is long enough to offer a modern historical perspective on the affairs of our region. It enables you to distinguish between short term matters of the moment and long term concerns.

I see this as an essential function of the Council. Those of us charged with the day-to-day running of national affairs are inevitably pre-occupied with short term considerations. It is you who are able to look ahead over the coming twenty years and judge what verdict the next generation of Asia-Pacific citizens may hand down on our work today.

It is you who are best able to keep in mind our vision of a future Pacific community, one that links all our people from rural villages to urban cities and from small islands to great metropolitan centres. You are uniquely equipped to provide

that perspective. That is why I, and my colleagues in government place such importance on your contribution to our region's cooperation and development.

We do not see the PECC as just an intellectual forum. We see it as a vital assembly of academic, commercial and government experts whose views are deeply respected. They will directly affect the decisions and actions we will support in ASEAN, APEC, the WTO and the United Nations. They will therefore profoundly influence the lives of the ordinary citizens we represent and the people we described at the APEC meeting in Blake Island back in 1993 as a "future Pacific community."

I particularly urge you to keep that vision in sight. It is a crucial one for every Pacific community and every Pacific family. They are seeking a simple right. This is the right to plan its future in peace and security and to lead its life in the prospect of increased prosperity. It is a fundamental right. It is our duty as governments to make it real and we are fortunate to be able to share some of that responsibility with those of you here today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

That task should not be obscured by passing events, no matter how grim they may appear at times. These are the stuff of hourly headlines and the currently fashionable "breaking news". Our people are beset by them every week and sometimes every day such as economic collapses, Government crises, catastrophe, extremism, discontent, and fanaticism.

If they are not political, they stem from religious, social, or cultural movements or even health crises such as this year's SARS epidemic. These are especially worrying for our people when they arouse ethnic and political hostility.

Here in Asia, there are many that are causing enormous concern and alarm. The most obvious one is "terrorism". When we in Brunei Darussalam hosted the ASEAN Summit in 2002, I expressed our horror and outrage at attacks against the innocent.

I also expressed our grave concern that this amounted to a profound attack on world order. I believe that the widespread international cooperation that followed the attacks on New York and Washington in 2001 has achieved much.

Nevertheless, the fact that criminal groups continue to plan and commit such atrocities has a profound bearing on our hopes for a genuine Pacific community. Nothing lowers a nation's morale more than a feeling that their government should have and could have done more. They must never have this feeling. It means that all government affairs whether domestic, regional or international must be conducted in extreme vigilance.

In your own deliberations, it means that none of your thinking can be conducted in isolation. There are modern political and security considerations that are bound to shape your ideas. I know you are all aware of this and I hope you will

be able to play a significant part in helping establish lasting confidence and stability in the Asia-Pacific.

I say this for a very important reason. By its very nature, your Council serves to bring people together. It allows them to get to know each other better and to share common concerns. Groups like yours can engage today's disputing parties in positive dialogue and discussion. The more you do this, the greater will be the chance of stability. If the regional community we seek is to have true meaning, no one should be excluded. Every emphasis should be placed on inclusion, involvement and sharing. After all, we are trying to build something new in the Pacific.

In this task, our governments could be called the region's constructors. And as all constructors are well aware, stability is the prime requirement for anything man-made. Yours, however, is a different role. You are among the region's most sought after architects. As such, your plans have to temper all designs for renewed dynamism with assurances that the foundations on which this is built are stable and lasting.

I regard this as the region's priority today. Three years after worldwide expressions of hope for the new century, our people are beset with predictions of doomsday. All of us in government have to do everything we can to assure the people that this is not the case.

In this, we need your help. Confidence will not come from optimistic sound-bites. It will grow steadily if we are able to offer an accurate and impartial assessment of modern life. A description that is not exaggerated one way or the other. One that helps us distinguish between passing trends and that which is truly and deeply disturbing.

That is why, Ladies and Gentlemen, I find it most fitting that the theme of this conference is "**Securing The Future**". You will be discussing "*a strategic path for the next decade*". I congratulate you on this choice. It calls on you to do what you do best. It asks you to assess the region as I have just suggested, objectively and accurately and to advise us skillfully.

Above all, it poses practical questions. What in reality actually threatens ordinary people's futures? How will it affect their economic development? And, as a result, in what way do you believe regional institutions need to change?

The PECC is well placed to do this. It has already become an invaluable regional resource. I believe there are special reasons for this. The Council owes this status not only to its undoubted economic expertise. It has also shown deep political awareness.

The groundwork for the establishment of APEC and all its subsequent achievements was not laid casually. Those who took part in that early work deliberately adopted what we in South East Asia believe is the only approach that

can offer long term success. Patience, sensitivity to others' concerns, and an unending search for consensus no matter how hard and frustrating the process of achieving it. It was this approach that provided the model for the open regionalism practiced by APEC and for economic integration in the Asia-Pacific. It is that same approach that will enable you to address fresh challenges successfully.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Much of what I have said so far is directed at the academics among you. The many private sector leaders assembled here offer a vital practical view. In Brunei, we are particularly pleased to welcome the special insights they offer.

Like our colleagues in ASEAN, we have embraced many aspects of globalisation. We are becoming more and more aware of its benefits. At the same time, we are learning about the many difficulties it can cause our people. For this reason, we have given strong support to your Development Agenda.

During APEC 2000 our theme was "Delivering to the Community". This highlighted the importance we attached to knowledge and the tools of ICT for developing our human resources. We set ambitious targets. Among these, were the "Brunei Internet Access Goals".

This aimed to triple the number of people with access by 2005 and to provide access to all by 2010. This, we said, can only be done through innovative partnerships between governments and the private sector. Those targets and digital tools remain relevant. They were re-emphasized by APEC in Mexico last year.

I am therefore glad to see that you will be discussing public and private partnerships in development and the role of knowledge and ICT in one of your sessions. In development matters such as these, the participation of international multilateral development agencies will also be crucial. So, I am pleased to see that their representatives will be joining your discussions.

I am also glad that speakers from outside the region have been invited to the conference. We have to reach out to others and learn from their experiences. So, I encourage you to continue expanding participation in the Council. This is now taking on new urgency.

In a few days, the WTO ministerial meeting will be taking place in Cancun. One pressing matter that I know you have been working on is particularly sensitive. This is the emergence of an increasing number of bilateral, regional and cross-regional trading arrangements. It is sometimes called a "newer regionalism". It could well present a basic challenge to the concept of "open regionalism". It could certainly impede our efforts at community-building and economic development.

Realities, however, could well dictate that it is here to stay. If so, how can we ensure that such pursuits are transparent and constructive? How can we be confident that they indeed form building blocks for freer trade? You will also be

conscious of a pressing fact. Most of the important deadlines set in November 2001 in the Doha development agenda have passed without agreement.

This demonstrates how difficult it is to reach consensus on how to reshape the international trading system. It emphasises the complexities involved in finding the best ways to support developing nations' deepest hopes and in fulfilling everyone's commitment to reducing world poverty.

It therefore increases the need for us to continue broadening the scope of consultation and doing everything we can to ensure that globalisation is an inclusive process that incorporates all views and all positions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your efforts here are extremely demanding. Although we need to maintain a long term view, current events are always at work. Hence, the burden we place on those like you, who offer us analysis and recommendations, is indeed heavy.

You have a tremendous task ahead as thinkers for this region. At this meeting, you will be able to hear and speak with political, business and thought leaders from around the world. It should result in some extremely valuable conclusions. I am very much looking forward to receiving and studying them.

Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Cancun meeting will receive worldwide attention. It is the focus of attention for many opposed to globalisation. Such critics have made it clear that they will not be easily satisfied. To answer them, governments need replies that are clearly made in the interests of ordinary people.

This means that great meetings such as this must have one overall focus. This is the welfare and economic future of the billions of ordinary people we are privileged to represent. The past record of the PECC gives me great confidence that this will indeed be the case over the next two or three days.

I am sure that all the expertise and wisdom you have assembled here will be devoted to that ultimate end. I wish much success in all your deliberations and with the kalimah, "*Bismillahir rahmanir rahim*", I have much pleasure in declaring the 15th Pacific Economic Cooperation Council General Meeting officially open.

Thank you.