

**WELCOMING REMARKS BY
THE VICE CHANCELLOR UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA AT
THE INAUGURAL UTM UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS FORUM 2009
26 MARCH, 2009
SENATE HALL,
UTM SKUDAI, JOHOR**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين
والصلاة والسلام على أشرف الأنبياء والمرسلين،
وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين.

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته
And A Very Good Afternoon

**Honourable Presidents,
Vice Presidents, and Representatives of University Presidents,
Distinguished Guests,
Professors and Colleagues from Local and Abroad
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to UTM Skudai and to the Inaugural UTM Presidents Forum. To most of you this visit would probably be your first visit to Malaysia. Selamat Datang. I hope your brief stay here in Johor will be a memorable and fruitful one.

This forum is aptly held at a moment when universities around the world are facing global international challenge and competition. The aim of this forum is thus to provide an avenue for university leaders to discuss current issues related to higher education and seek ways to improving collaboration and cooperation among the participating universities. Internationalisation is one of the major thrusts in the strategy set forth in the National Higher Education Action Plan for Malaysian Higher Institutions and in tandem with that, UTM has taken various initiatives to promote internationalisation as one of its main agenda in its commitment to integrate an international cross-cultural dimension into curriculum, teaching, learning, research and service activities of the university. As such, this forum aims to intensify opportunities for collaborative efforts with our international partners in various activities and fields. It is hoped that this forum would provide an international platform for university leaders to engage in discussions and deliberate on challenges facing higher education and share experiences in ways to handle or overcome such challenges. More importantly, the forum would hopefully enhance collaboration in international academic and research programs and intensify student and staff exchange for a more effective and purposeful academic, social and cultural engagement.

Ladies and gentleman,

Nations everywhere understand that their futures are inextricably interlinked to the talent inherent in their young people, and this must be unleashed, and

enabled, by the very best education and support to optimize the benefits in our desire to fostering the development of quality human intellectual capital.

We should note that the 21st century challenges are seldom borne out of a single issue. They are complex, interlinked, and multilateral. For example, a science or engineering problem might be intertwined with other aspects or elements such as environmental regulations and sustainability, international law, a medical component, a diplomatic or geopolitical factor, or an ethical challenge.

Today's students are also faced with a 'flattening world', to use Friedman's term, and a globally interlinked marketplace of ideas and forces. As such, they must be prepared to ride the challenge and face unpredictable confrontations. They must be able to think beyond the horizon in order to thrive, contribute, motivate and lead in the present climate of change.

In order to do this effectively, today's students must be educated to become culturally sophisticated individuals, who can understand and solve complex problems. They need to acquire multicultural understanding, and have the ability to operate within a global context. Their education must prepare them with intellectual agility to see connections between disciplines and among sectors, across a broad intellectual milieu.

Students' international exposure and experience is thus an important aspect of their education in preparation for a global workplace. As such, acquiring

international experience is encouraged and given priority in UTM. One such programme is the global outreach programme where students spend a semester abroad not just for academic exchange but also to gain cultural and international experience. For example, under the Institute for Environmental and Water Resource Management, a few selected UTM engineering students spend a term at Denmark Technological University as part of their postgraduate programme. This June, UTM and DTU will organize a 3 weeks Summer School on Sustainable Production with IOECT. 40 students will be attending, 15 from Denmark, 5 from the Netherlands, 5 from Vietnam and the rest from Malaysia.

Last year, twenty UTM undergraduate students spent an intensive week in Shibaura Institute of Technology, participating in the South East Asia Technology University Consortium (SEATUC) program. Recently, the program brought the students and professors from each of the four universities – from UTM, ITB, King Mongkut, Hanoi University of Technology and Shibaura to the recently held third SEATUC symposium at UTM.

Regionally we are actively engaged with our partners in NUS, Singapore, Indonesia, (among them ITS, ITB, Sriwijaya, Airlangga, Universitas Indonesia, Bung Hatta) in student exchange programmes, staff visits, research and academic collaborations. The groupings are varied, but all of them have one distinct feature, which is, synergistic alliances and networking for mutual benefit.

Thus, international exchange enhances the international and multicultural outlook of students and faculty at home as well as our partner institutions as well as promote research agendas and capabilities. It is our sincere hope that this forum will result in workable initiatives and collaborative enterprise in academic as well as research activities.

One example of such initiatives is the Low Carbon Initiative Project between several universities, where funding for the activities are made available by the participating universities. Other initiatives in the pipeline include The Green City Initiatives or Climate Change Initiatives.

The present scenario in Malaysia allows UTM to embark on various internationalization projects in a more systematic way. On top of what I have mentioned, UTM is in the process to increase international academic staff by employing another 200 this year. We also would like to increase postgraduate students from 35% students population at the moment to 50% later this year or middle 2010. It also means we plan to increase international students from 3,000 to 5,000, with the help of foreign academic staff. In addition we would like to invite foreign Professors to serve as Visiting Professors in UTM, and vice versa, to serve as PhD co-supervisors, PhD examiners or promotion reviewers.

I leave it to your greater wisdom, experience and leadership for creative input to make this forum a beneficial one for all of us. My sincere appreciation to the

members of the Organizing Committee for their hard work and dedication to help ensure the success of the forum.

To all, I wish you a meaningful and rewarding experience at UTM.

Thank you.

وبالله التوفيقُ والهداية،
والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.