

**International Seminar
“Youth Organisations as Nonformal Learning
Institutions”**

CLOSING ADDRESS BY:

**YAB Datuk Seri Mohd Ali bin Mohd Rustam
PRESIDENT
WORLD ASSEMBLY OF YOUTH**

29 February 2008 (Friday)

5.00 PM

WAY Headquarter

Y.Bhg. Dato' / Datuk.....

Members of the IYC Board of Trustees,

Distinguished guests,

Participants of the Seminar,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the World Assembly of Youth, I would like to welcome the participants of the International Seminar on “Youth Organisations as a Nonformal Learning Institution” organized by the International Youth Centre, Kuala Lumpur on 24 February to 2 March 2008 to our headquarter of WAY.

It is a great honour for us that the International Youth Center has chosen to visit us and to officiate the closing ceremony of this International Seminar in the WAY headquarter. I am very happy that IYC has taken the initiative to host this seminar with this theme of “Youth Organisations as Nonformal Learning Institutions”. This is a concept that should be stressed to all youth organisations. It is also related to the goals of the World Assembly of Youth and the United Nations that learning is an important component of youth development. Without this component, the role of youth organisations is meaningless. It is through learning that youths can develop themselves and become assets to their community and a contributor to nation building.

In the globalised world today where changes, development and evolution takes place at great speed and pace, the ability to learn is no longer confined to the early phase of life, but extended throughout one's lifetime. The youths should therefore develop their capabilities to learn in order to keep pace with the developments and adapt to the changes taking place all the time.

Youth organisations must change with the times. They must also reengineer and readapt to become learning institutions where they provide the opportunities for learning and to facilitate the learning process of the youths. And learning need not be confined merely to the rigid system of formal learning as practiced in schools and institutions of higher learning. Learning can take place all the time, including being nonformal and informal. They can also take place at any place and through every moment of a person's life. The daily experiences in life that we go through from moment to moment itself can be a classroom from where lessons can be learned. It is only a matter for the relevant organisations and the youths themselves to be instilled with the culture of learning. This is one practice that youth organisations should consider and study on how it can be approached.

WAY has been a nonformal institution since the founding day, on August 1949. WAY works for promotion of youth and youth organization in different programme areas on youth issues. The first very lesson of WAY to the youth and the world, was democracy, then later on spread to different areas such as: youth employment, environment, human rights, democracy, population, health, drugs, HIV/AIDS, community development and leadership training. At a later stage WAY developed another nonformal learning institution, known as the World Youth Institute, the main educational wing of WAY.

World Youth Institute is geared to be a leading institution for empowerment and capacity building through education, training and development programmes. This institute not only precedes the existence of an intellectual and practical platform that gathers youth from all over the world, but also fosters global connections and enhances relationships between youth worldwide. As we all know, youth are an important group of people in this society.

Everywhere in the world, youth pose an essential role as the leaders of tomorrow. Youth need to possess awareness on what is happening in the world today, be it on environment, economics, education and so on. In the wake of the globalization era, youth have to arm themselves with abilities, be it in terms of communication, exchange of ideas, or social integration. The very anticipation of each and every youth of the world has to be triggered and generated by something, as in to produce a group of elite youth of the globe.

Even though learning can only be effected if and when an individual is ready and willing to learn, youth organisations can serve as a platform to facilitate an environment that motivates youth to learn and develop the relevant learning skills that they can apply in their life's experiences. The new global era demands that youth organisations should take a paradigm shift and move beyond merely a platform for activities and leadership development. While this traditional concept is still the primary role of youth organisations and the basis for their existence, a new life cycle of extending their future relevance and survival means that youth organisations cannot deny their necessity for being innovative in new ideas and approaches of their practices and models for youth development.

All nations in the world have high expectations of their youths who are going to inherit the legacies of the leaders today in national development. Youths today are the nations' assets and their asset development will determine the future progress and survival of the nation. In some countries where youths are unable to learn about living a healthy life and develop healthy lifestyles, the economies of these countries are now being threatened.

Our world today is too complex and sophisticated for us to teach our youths everything that they need to learn. Moreover, as mentioned we are living in a constant state of flux. It is almost impossible to predict and determine what could happen tomorrow and the days, months, years ahead. So it is therefore neither possible to prepare them for their future. The only practical means is to prepare them to be able to learn, to develop their skills and competencies for learning so that they can be self-reliant and resiliency in facing the dealing with the challenges of the future. It is no longer the premise of feeding them fish everyday, but about teaching them how to fish.

Youth organisations therefore have no choice but to review their mission and goals and to reinvent themselves such that they remain relevant today and years to come. The formula today is for them to become learning platforms for the youths to learn.

I hope that this Seminar has opened your eyes to reinvent yourselves and you have found some answers to issues that have plagued some of your organisations in the past. It may not be the full answer to your problems but could have given you new directions for you in helping to resolve these problems. Youth

development today is no longer about perception of youth as liabilities, but as assets to be developed and nurtured.

I hope you have had a fruitful and rewarding seminar and hope you will also have the opportunity to learn about the Malaysian lifestyle and cultures. With this, I declare the International Seminar on Youth Organisations as Nonformal Learning Institutions close.