

SPEECH

**BY THE HONOURABLE DATUK LIOW TIONG LAI, DEPUTY MINISTER
OF YOUTH AND SPORTS, MALAYSIA
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
7TH MELAKA INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DIALOGUE
MONDAY 25 JUNE 2007
MITC HOTEL, MELAKA**

Honourable Datuk R. Raghavan
State Executive Councillor for Youth and Sports

Honourable Saviour Kasukuwere
Deputy Minister of Youth Development and Employment Creation, Republic
of Zimbabwe

Honourable Pohamba Shifeta
Deputy Minister of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture, Republic of
Namibia

Honourable Moamar Al-Eryani, Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports,
Republic of Yemen

Honourable Patrick Zhuwao, Deputy Minister of Science and Technology
Development, Zimbabwe

Honourable Dr Edwin Muguti, Deputy Minister of Health and Child Welfare,
Zimbabwe

Yang Mulia Dato' Raja Ruslan bin Raja Samah, Director of the International
Youth Centre, Kuala Lumpur

Mr. Donald Charumbira
Secretary General of the World Assembly of Youth

Mr Nundkeswarsing Bossoondyal, Vice President of the World Assembly of
Youth

Mr Ernesto Kesar, Vice President of the World Assembly of Youth
Mr Norizan Shariff, Secretary General of the Asian Youth Council
Mr Khider Ahmen Musa, President of the National Federation of Sudanese Youth

Government Officials

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Executive Committee Members of the World Assembly of Youth

Youth Leaders from around the World

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to officiate at this opening ceremony of the 7th Melaka International Youth Dialogue.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to see such a diversity of faces, representing all corners of the world, gathered to further the cause of youth development in the world.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports is delighted to be a partner in this event, one of the annual youth programmes organized in a regular annual basis in Malaysia. Through such forums, it is hoped that young people will be able to network, exchange experiences, form partnerships, and work towards alleviating the challenges faced by youth around the world.

I am further pleased to recognize the participation of esteemed ministers responsible for youth and also members of parliament in this Dialogue. This is evidence of the commitment of these leaders towards empowering the youth in their countries. I extend my deepest appreciation to you for taking time off your busy schedules to engage with other young people at this Dialogue.

To all the participants who have come from far and wide, I would like to extend to you a warm welcome to Malaysia. You are visiting us at a time when we are also celebrating our 50th Independence, and this year has been named Visit Malaysia Year. We have extended an invitation for the world to come to Malaysia and join us in our golden celebrations.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The youth development agenda is gaining momentum worldwide. Not only has it been realised that youth are the most vulnerable segment of any nations society, but it is also acknowledged that youth can make tremendous contributions towards the economic, social, cultural and political developments in their countries. Every young person has the potential to contribute positively towards his or her country, region, and indeed, the world at large.

The question that remains is on the best strategies to employ to bring out this potential in the youth.

Malaysia has recently enacted the Youth Act which stipulates that youth leaders should be between the ages of 15 to 40. This landmark piece of legislations intends to ensure that the youth become more involved in the leadership of youth organisations, and that they are not only beneficiaries but also the managers, controllers and organisers of their own programmes and activities.

We anticipate that from the introduction of this Act, more youth will be absorbed into leadership positions, which should have a positive stimulating effect on all our youth organisations.

It is essential for any nation to groom its youth into responsible leaders that will be invaluable assets for the country in the present and into the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am pleased to note that the theme of the 7th Melaka International Youth Dialogue is Youth and Tourism. It affords the participants a platform to reflect on how the tourism industry can contribute to the youth development process.

Tourism helps to create jobs, provide livelihood and also encourage the creativity of youth. Through the increasing trends of global travel and communications, the world has become a smaller global village, and this has created better understanding and intercultural relations between the various peoples of the world. Tourism therefore advances the prospects of peace and equity.

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation has recorded a 4.5% annual increase in tourist arrivals in 2006. A total of 842 million international tourist arrivals were recorded last year.

In his message on World Tourism Day 2006, the secretary general of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation said:

"There is no doubt that tourism keeps the world economy on the move. It is number one in world trade, the largest export earner, and employs millions of people. Most of these jobs are in small or medium-sized, family-owned businesses... Jobs and enterprises are usually created in the most underdeveloped regions, helping to spread economic opportunities throughout the country and providing an incentive to remain in rural areas."

Unlike most forms of business enterprises, tourism businesses are not capital intensive, and only require a little creativity and marketing. Cultural performances, tour operations, sport and recreation activities are all different types of tourism enterprises that are not very resource-intensive.

An opportunity therefore exists for governments, youth organisations and international agencies to harness the potential of tourism to contribute towards youth development goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to urge all participants in this Dialogue to make maximum use of the sessions in order to gain knowledge, share experiences and network with youth from other parts of the world.

When you return to your countries, I do hope that you will work to implement projects and ideas that will improve your lives, as well as the lives of other youths.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the World Assembly of Youth on organising this key annual event, as well as all the partners and contributors.

I do hope that you will all have a pleasant and enjoyable stay, and that you will take back some sweet memories to your countries.

I thank you.