



WELCOMING REMARKS YANG BERHORMAT PEHIN ORANG KAYA SERI UTAMA DATO SERI SETIA AWANG HAJI YAHYA BIN BEGAWAN MUDIM DATO PADUKA HAJI BAKAR, MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND PRIMARY RESOURCES, BRUNEI DARUSSALAM, at the OPENING CEREMONY OF "5TH UNWTO ASIA/PACIFIC EXECUTIVE TRAINING PROGRAMME ON TOURISM POLICY AND STRATEGY" - Monday, 13th June 2011, Indera Kayangan Ballroom, The Empire Hotel and Country Club

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to warmly welcome to Brunei Darussalam all speakers and participants to this **5th UNWTO Asia/Pacific Executive Training Programme on Tourism Policy and Strategy**.

My special thanks and words of appreciation to the World Tourism Organization for choosing Brunei Darussalam to organize this Executive Training Programme.

This Training Programme brings together senior director level participants of several of the National Tourism Administrations from UNWTO member states in the region. Such interaction amongst officials who shape and implement their respective countries' policies relating to tourism at individual levels will bring about a better understanding of each other policies; and, learn from best practices.

At strategic level, we hope the interaction will bring about greater regional cooperation and benefits. We are all partners and stand to gain more from working together. One such mutually beneficial endeavour is getting consumers to change their travel behaviour in favour of our region, in favour of the type of destinations we represent and in favour of the kind of products that we offer.

The Asia/Pacific region has a lot of varied and different tourist destinations and experiences to offer. Brunei Darussalam too has varied and different tourist destinations and experiences to offer.

Tourism in Brunei Darussalam in many ways is quite unique. Its contribution to the country's Gross Domestic Product is only about 3.2%. The multiplier effect on the economy is not as strong as our neighbouring countries around the region because of its weak link to the rest of the economy. The sector is still in its infancy compared to others in the region. Competition with other nearby destinations are stiff and our rank in terms of travel and tourism competitiveness is 69th out of 133 countries. Despite the recent strong growth, it has been slow and tourist arrivals are amongst the lowest in the world - a rank of 148 out of 180 countries. These are the hard and painful facts.

Nonetheless behind all these weakness, Brunei Darussalam has its own strength. Therefore, the Ministry has reviewed its approach to tourism and has taken a stand to approach tourism based on the strength the country has. A Study to Formulate Strategic Direction for the Tourism Industry in Brunei is being undertaken.

The approach we take to tourism in this country is based on the philosophy of ALTERNATIVE TOURISM developed by KRIPPENDORF, J who wrote in 1982 in a seminal work entitled TOWARDS NEW TOURISM POLICIES. This approach would ensure that tourism policies should no longer concentrate on economic and technical necessities alone, but rather emphasise the demand for an unspoiled environment and consideration of the need of local people. This approach places natural, cultural and religious resources AT THE FOREFRONT of planning and development, instead of as an afterthought. Also inherent in this approach it provides the MEANS FOR THE COUNTRY to control outside influences and addressing the need for balanced, inclusive, sustainable and secure growth for the country.

In a nutshell, we intend to focus on NICHE TOURISM based on the strength the country has and will develop such as nature, cultural, religious and historical, education and other attributes. In other word, our pristine nature, our rich culture and traditions, our strong Islamic heritage and our stability, safety as well as other attributes are the assets that we intend to utilize.

There are many advantages to this approach. Besides the usual benefits that a conventional or mass tourism will bring to the country such as tourist infrastructure, important benefits are:

- Local population and community will gain income and managerial skills; and,
- Promote international, interregional and intercultural understanding;

In a study done by the European Commission back in 2004, tourism in Europe is supposed to double until the early 2030's with most of this coming in the form of alternative tourism.

To conclude, let us therefore learn more about our trade during this Training Program, I wish you an excellent week ahead, and once again, welcome to Brunei Darussalam, Abode of Peace and Kingdom of Unexpected Treasures in the Green Heart of Borneo !

Thank you.