



OPENING SPEECH BY 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

**FOR “THE CELEBRATE THE SEA FESTIVAL 2012” IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE WORLD OCEANS DAY 2013
AT THE EMPIRE HOTEL AND COUNTRY CLUB,
ON SATURDAY, 8 JUNE 2013/28 REJAB 1434**

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Yang Mulia, Dayang Hajah Normah Suria Hayati binti Pehin Jawatan Dalam Seri Maharaja Dato Seri Utama (Dr.) Haji Awang Mohd Jamil Al-Sufri, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources, as the Chairperson of the Organizing Committee;

Your Excellencies High Commissioners and Ambassadors,

Yang Berhormat Members of the Legislative Councils; Deputy Permanent Secretaries, our co-organiser Ocean Geographic, lead by Michael Aw, Heads of Departments, speakers, divers, guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and A Very Good Morning,

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be with you all here today at the Launching of The 12th Celebrate the Sea Festival in conjunction with the World Ocean Day 2013. I would like to thank the Organising Committee for inviting me as the Guest of Honour for this occasion.

World Oceans Day is officially recognized by the United Nations and is celebrated worldwide every 8th June to mark and appreciate the contribution and importance of the oceans and its marine life to human. The theme for this year is “**Oceans and People**” which calls on us to appreciate the importance of our oceans for us today and for the future generation.

This year's celebration is being held hand-in-hand with the Celebrate the Sea Festival, which Brunei Darussalam, for the first time, is proudly hosting at its 12th year since its inception.

This Festival is the biggest annual international event of the sea ever staged in the Asia-Pacific region. Since 2002, the Festival held in Singapore, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Malaysia and the Philippines has attracted participation from 38 countries. “**Celebrate the Sea**” was held in association with the World Festival of Underwater Pictures where in France, it is also known as the “Cannes of Underwater Film Festivals”.

It is most appropriate for Brunei Darussalam, to be the host for this most important event of the sea: our country with more than 41,000 square kilometres of water supports a rich system of marine biodiversity; home to some 400 coral species; and a great fish diversity of 670 species.

The 12th Celebrate the Sea will perhaps the most significant festival to date. Therefore, **Brunei Darussalam wish to take this opportunity to make a landmark declaration today: THAT WITH THE CONSENT OF HIS MAJESTY SULTAN HAJI HASSANAL BOLKIAH MUI'ZZADDIN WADDAULAH IBNI AL-MARHUM SULTAN HAJI OMAR 'ALI SAIFUDDIEN SA'ADUL KHAIRI WADDIEN, THE SULTAN AND YANG DI-PERTUAN OF BRUNEI DARUSSALAM, THE GOVERNMENT OF HIS MAJESTY THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES WILL ENFORCE THE BAN ON THE CATCH AND LANDINGS OF ALL SHARK SPECIES FROM THE WATERS OF BRUNEI DARUSSALAM AND THUS THEIR SALES IN THE DOMESTIC MARKET. FURTHERMORE, THE GOVERNMENT OF HIS MAJESTY WILL ALSO NOW OFFICIALLY ENFORCE THE BAN ON THE IMPORTATION AND TRADE OF SHARKS PRODUCTS WHICH HAS BEEN IN PLACE SINCE AUGUST 2012. THESE MEASURES ARE, PROBABLY, THE WORLD'S FIRST COMMITMENT BY ANY COUNTRY.**

The rationale behind this Declaration are: firstly, our concern on food security; and secondly the environmental consideration.

Fish resources around the waters of Brunei Darussalam are declining significantly, just like any other countries in the world. The fish resources is about 21% of what it was in 1999. This is mainly due to overfishing. Shark catches, particularly, are declining significantly over the years. The catches were around 40 metric tons in 1994 and they fell to 16 metric tons in 2011, even though shark is not a targeted fish in Brunei Darussalam.

The world at the moment is facing a similar decline. We know that the sharks are targeted for their fins only, whereas the rest of the body are just discarded back to the sea, most of the time barely breathing, to die.

We all know that, biologically, sharks occupy an important hierarchy in the marine food web as higher predators in the marine environment. Any alteration of that level will inevitably result in the disturbance of the existing balance of nature and the marine food web.

Aside from that, some studies have shown that shark meat may expose oneself to potentially dangerous, high levels of methylmercury, an organic form of mercury which is a neurotoxin or a toxin that affects one's nervous systems.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The ban supports the international instruments namely, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora or CITES that has just included, at the recent 16th Conference of Parties (16th CoP) on CITES held on 3 – 14 March 2013, Bangkok, Thailand, more shark species were included in its Appendices, and many more were listed in International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as vulnerable, endangered and threatened.

The impact of the ban, hopefully, would, decrease the fishing pressure towards the shark resources, especially, in Brunei Darussalam's waters and generally, in the international waters. This would ensure the shark resources of Brunei Darussalam, and thus the fisheries resources overall, would be guaranteed to be in a preserved state in the future.

Therefore, with this ban, it is further hoped it would become a lesson to us that the fish resources are not finite to be exploited as much as one can. This ban would be able to assist in the stock recovery and to prevent further species loss culminating in the loss of the marine biodiversity of the region, and with particular emphasis to the waters of Brunei Darussalam. These resources should be well-managed and taken care of so that they would always be sustainable for the generations to come.

Before I end my speech, I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who worked day and night back stage in ensuring that this occasion runs smooth and successful.

With the kalimah, Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim I now officially launch **THE 12TH CELEBRATE THE SEA FESTIVAL in conjunction with The World Ocean Day 2013.**

Wabillahi taufik walhidayah Wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi taala wabarakatuh. Thank you for your attention.