

**OPENING REMARKS BY**

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On the occasion of  
The 10<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (10<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-WEN)  
And  
The 11<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Experts Group on the Convention on International Trade in  
Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (11<sup>th</sup> AEG-CITES)

Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2015  
Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam

## **Bismillahahir Rahmaneer Raheem**

Distinguished Heads of Delegation of the ASEAN Member States,  
the ASEAN Secretariat, the ASEAN-WEN Program Coordination Unit,  
Dialogue and Development Partners, Delegates,  
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

## **Assalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakaatuh**

A very Good morning and salam sejahtera.

Praises be to Allah Subahanahu Wataala, selawat and salam to our Prophet, Nabi Muhammad Sallallahu Alaihi Wassalam. Alhamdulillah, with the gracious blessings of Allah Subahanahu Wataala, we are able to gather here this morning.

Let me begin by thanking the organiser for inviting me to be the Guest of Honour and to deliver an Opening Remarks at the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEAN WEN and the 11<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Experts Group on CITES Meetings, and to host all of you here, in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam.

I would also like to extend a warm "**Selamat Datang**" or welcome to all of you, particularly our ASEAN delegates, dialogue and development partners and guests. I am indeed honoured and it is a pleasure to be here.

## **Distinguished Delegates, Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The problems of wildlife crimes are not confined to individual nations only, as plants and animals are trafficked across borders, and the overall effects are having far-reaching implications for society which threatens the national and international security, as it often undermines the rule of law and good governance. The key principle at play here is for us to take a tough stance that whilst freer movement and integration is promoted, the sanctity of our countries' borders must be respected

The Illicit wildlife trafficking describes as any wildlife and environment-related crime that involves the illegal trade, smuggling, poaching, capture or collection of endangered species, protected wildlife (including wild fauna and flora that are subject to harvest quotas and regulated by permits), derivatives or products thereof. A thriving and rich biologically diverse wildlife form the very foundation of the nature and ecotourism sector in many of the world's destinations;

The illegal exploitation of wildlife is capable of heavily depleting species and degrades ecosystems that support our very existence, in some cases, poses the

potential loss to national biodiversity and bringing a species close to extinction. Scientists believe that up to 40% of the animal and plant species in Southeast Asia could be wiped out over this century, with at least half these losses representing global extinctions.

Recently I was watching a video entitled, "Is this the kind of world we want, it asks?" (Updated in 2010) by The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) which notes that many species are threatened with extinction. In addition, at threat of extinction are:

- 1 out of 8 birds
  - 1 out of 4 mammals
  - 1 out of 4 conifers
  - 1 out of 3 amphibians
  - 6 out of 7 marine turtles
- 
- 75% of genetic diversity of agricultural crops has been lost
  - 75% of the world's fisheries are fully or over exploited
  - Up to 70% of the world's known species risk extinction if the global temperatures rise by more than 3.5 degrees C
  - 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of reef-building corals around the world are threatened with extinction.

However, while the threats to wildlife are great and real, we can reduce them through our collective efforts and coordinated joint actions for a greater unity and integration to address the illegal exploitation and trade in CITES-listed species within and beyond the ASEAN region. Involving ASEAN Member States as well as all relevant governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations in these efforts is important.

### **Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

For Brunei Darussalam, the establishment of the Wildlife Division within the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources, in October 2012, shows our continued commitment and determination in the management of wild fauna and flora in the country. Realizing the importance of the management of the wildlife, we are currently in the process of revising our existing Wildlife Protection Act, and to align with our obligation in the regional and international fora, such as the Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The most recent activities of the Wildlife Division were the organization of workshops on the conservation of wildlife including the Pangolins and the sea

turtles, which are meant to create awareness regarding the importance of these animals.

Brunei Darussalam prohibits the catch and selling of sharks and their products since June 2012 as a measure to ensure that the sharks resources in Brunei Darussalam's water are well preserved for generation to come. 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. The ban also supports the international instruments, namely, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora or CITES that has just included more shark species in its Appendices, and many more were also listed in International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as vulnerable, endangered and threatened. According to the Journal of Marine Policy which published a report in 2013, an estimated 100 million of sharks are killed each year; millions killed from overfishing and trade, and many also die accidentally in fishing nets set for tuna and swords fish while others are caught for their meat or just for their fins. As we know, sharks are known as the "apex predator" of the seas. Without sufficient shark numbers the balance they provide to the ecosystem is threatened because nature evolved this balance through many millennia. The additional concern is that many of the most threatened species are slow to reproduce, so their populations cannot keep up with the rate they are being needlessly killed.

### **Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am pleased to note that through annual meetings, workshops and trainings, the ASEAN-WEN facilitates increased capacity and better coordination of wildlife law enforcement groups and supporting organisations have broadened the Network's and the CITES Experts group's reach. Along with an increase in ASEAN-WEN's visibility, the region has also experienced a recent increase in wildlife law enforcement actions in Southeast Asia.

I was also made to understand on the development of the post-2015 Strategic Plan of Actions (SPA) of the ASEAN Experts Group on CITES and the ASEAN-WEN which focus on strengthening the regional cooperation and integration. The SPA on ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network focus on strengthening networking for collaborative activities including reducing the supply of and demand for illegally traded wildlife, increasing public awareness and education, and improving legislations and policy support to treat wildlife trafficking as serious crime. On the other hand, the SPA on AEG-CITES basically focused on strengthening the Regional Action Plan of the trade of wild fauna and flora, taking into consideration on the outcomes of the CITES Standing

Committee, CITES Agricultural Committee and CITES Plant Committee, as well as the progress and status of the CITES Endangered Aquatic Species issues.

**Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am confident, with your collective knowledge and expertise, we could work together to address our challenges in achieving the primary objectives of the ASEAN-WEN and AEG-CITES cooperation and collaboration, and play our essential roles in providing support towards the implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community Blueprint towards a better ASEAN community.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to our development partners, for their continuous support, cooperation and collaboration in the programme and work plan related to ASEAN WEN and AEG CITES.

In conclusion, allow me once again to offer our warm welcome to our delegates and guests. Please find time to explore and visit some of the interesting places in the country and enjoy your brief stay in Brunei Darussalam.

Last but not least, I would like to thank those involved in organizing this meeting, especially the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN WEN Program Coordination Unit for providing the necessary assistance to ensure the success of this meeting.

With the Kalimah Bismillaahirrahmaneer Raheem, I now declare the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEAN WEN and the 11<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Experts Group on CITES Meetings open.

Thank you and I wish you all a fruitful meeting.

Wabillahi Taufik Walhidayah Wassalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh