



**YOUNG SOUTHEAST ASIAN LEADERS INITIATIVE (YSEALI) GENERATION:
ECO-ENTREPRENEURSHIP
WORKSHOP ON ECOTOURISM**

**WELCOME REMARKS
BY**

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AWANG HAJI ALI BIN APONG
MINISTER OF PRIMARY RESOURCES AND TOURISM
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM**

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Radisson Hotel, Brunei Darussalam

Bismillah hir Rahman nir Rahim

Distinguished Guests, the Embassy of the United States of America in
Brunei Darussalam,
AGREA Philippines,
Delegates,
Friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh and a very good evening
to all of you.

1. On behalf of the Government of His Majesty and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, it is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative Generation: Eco-Entrepreneurship Workshop on Ecotourism here in Brunei Darussalam. I am pleased to see you all here with enthusiasm to learn and share your unique experiences and talents during this four-day workshop.
2. I would like to acknowledge with thanks, the invaluable support provided by the Embassy of the United States of America to Brunei Darussalam and the AGREA Philippines in organizing this ecotourism workshop here in our country. I admire the demonstration of your partnership and advocacy in promoting ecological tourism here in Brunei Darussalam and the rest of the member countries of Southeast Asia. During your stay here, we also wish to share the same advocacy by demonstrating our experiences in the development and promotion of our local ecotourism. We hope that you will find it interesting and worth adopting in your home countries as well.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. Ecotourism is among the fastest growing industries in the world. Some studies refer ecotourism to become so powerful with an estimated 9% share of the global Gross Domestic Product. And as a result, more and more countries continued to conserve their natural environment and promote sustainable and ecological tourism practices.

4. Ecotourism is not limited to economic growth. It also addresses key global issues and concerns that we are facing at the moment. To name a few, ecotourism provides opportunities for increase local production whereby it demonstrated the optimum combination of indigenous knowledge and modern technologies through sustainable agriculture in such a manner that a major part of our national food requirements are locally produced. And to some extent, agricultural waste and similar by-products are used for compost and organic farming or as an alternative source of energy. Likewise, it promotes the development of affordable and reliable energy necessary for community progress and livelihood opportunities.
5. Ecotourism conserves healthy environment. It is an industry that requires natural and healthy environment in order to succeed. Ecotourism is an industry that assures the protection of nature and assist human beings to reconnect with it and at the same time give inspirations in taking actions to protect the earth. And at some point, it is an industry capable of changing the production and consumption patterns of our natural resources from extractive to conservative nature. For this, we have to bear in mind that we would lose our eco-tourist customers if we will not provide safe water, sanitation, fresh air, and natural environment.
6. In a capsule, we can say that ecotourism had its own code of ethics in protecting our exclusive cultural and local values. It was a belief driven by the values of preserving the land, air, water, cultural heritage, and communities while operating safely in sustaining its economic portfolio and increasing profits. With these points in mind, including the proper implementation on the ground, we are

promoting peace and understanding among different cultures and communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. Ecotourism is a cross-cutting strategy in attaining our Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). Whereby we intend to formulate and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products as well as impact monitoring. While ecotourism directly respond to these specific goals, it actually encompasses all of the SDG's. Ecotourism has already provided us, through best practices, the concrete practical models of its implementation. As such, ecotourism is a great opportunity for us to organize around to successfully conserve our natural environment and the attainment of our SDG's.
8. On the national scale, ecotourism is expected to facilitate the achievements of our Brunei Vision 2035 of having well-educated and highly skilled communities, quality life, and with dynamic and sustainable economy. It likewise supports our eight national strategies on education, economy, security, institutional development, local business development, infrastructure development, social security, and environmental strategy.
9. The Government of His Majesty, the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, re-affirmed his aspirations in enhancing the growth of the primary resources and tourism sectors of the country during the reorganization of the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism in October 2015. At present, the Ministry is promoting sustainable and modern farming to increase production and

minimize the conversion of forestlands into other uses. Likewise, increasing fisheries production through sustainable aquaculture is being put forward to help reverse the depletion of wild fish stock and minimize the destruction of our coral reefs.

10. The Ministry is leading the promotion and strengthening of the ecotourism industry in the country. We believe in creating an ecological conscience among ecotourism players, and the need to connect business operation with forest conservation, local communities, and sustainable travel. As such, private and public ecotourism players and facilitators shall provide equal importance on profit generations, environmental conservation, local communities, and local knowledge. This approach will allow tourists to gain new experiences and will enhance their views of Brunei cultural heritage and practices and at the same time promote local economic development and progress.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. The conduct of this Eco-Entrepreneurial Workshop on Ecotourism here in Brunei Darussalam is very timely and a very welcome undertaking to further our knowledge about ecological tourism. We are looking forward for the sharing of expertise from our distinguished speakers and the sharing of country experiences from participants. Brunei has great potentials for ecotourism in view of our pristine forest areas and water bodies. Almost half of our total land area is part of the National Forest Estate, and as part of our commitment to further the integrity of our environment, we would like to learn from the entrepreneurial and creative minds of this forum to further our ecotourism industry.

12. Our pristine natural environment is easily accessible, safe, stable, prosperous and free of most tropical diseases. We are sheltered from natural disasters and had a sound and clear policy on protecting natural heritage. We have been dubbed as one of Asia's best kept secret and has a tremendous potential to become one of the world's top destinations for tropical rainforest ecotourism.
13. We are honoured to host this workshop as we are happy to lead you in widening your knowledge based from our own ecotourism experience. Farm technology and practices such as vertical farming and permaculture, using new technology integrated with traditional farming system and modern technique can be a potential ecotourism attractions too. We are very glad to lead you in this partnership to promote ecotourism in Southeast Asia for the greater benefits of our natural environment and local communities.
14. In conclusion, I would like to wish everybody a fruitful workshop. I hope that you all meet the desired objectives of this program and at the same time appreciate your one-day immersion program at Sumbiling eco-village. I would also like to extend my advance congratulations to the winning group for the best ecotourism idea. Nevertheless, we need to keep in mind that you all are already winners in attending this workshop.
15. With the Kalimah 'Bismillah hir Rahman nir Rahim' and with Salawat and Salam to our Prophet Muhammad Sallallahu Alahi Wassalam, may Peace be Upon Him, it is indeed my great honor and pleasure to welcome you all once again in this Eco-Entrepreneurship Workshop on Ecotourism.

Wabillahit Taufiq Walhidayah, Wassalamualaikum Warahmatulahi
Wabarakatuh.