



**23rd CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS AND PRESIDING OFFICERS
OF THE COMMONWEALTH (CSPOC)**

WELCOMING SPEECH BY

**H.E. TAN SRI DATUK SERI PANGLIMA PANDIKAR AMIN MULIA
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
PARLIAMENT OF MALAYSIA**

ON

**11TH JANUARY 2016 AT 9.55 am
AT THE BANQUET HALL, LEVEL 2,
SABAH STATE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
KOTA KINABALU, SABAH**

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim, Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh

(Salutations)

Rt. Honourable Dato' Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi,
Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia;

Rt. Honourable Datuk Seri Panglima Musa Haji Aman,
Chief Minister of the State of Sabah;

Honourable Senator Tan Sri Abu Zahar Dato' Nika Ujang
President of Senate, Parliament of Malaysia;

Honourable Datuk Syed Abas Syed Ali
Speaker of the Sabah State Legislative Assembly;
Hon. Deputy Speaker of Senate President of Malaysia;

Hon. Deputy Speakers of Dewan Rakyat, Parliament of Malaysia;

Hon. Ministers of Federal Government;

Hon. Ministers and Assistant Ministers of the Sabah State Government;

Excellencies Speakers of the Commonwealth Parliaments;

Hon. Speakers of the Respective State Legislative Assemblies of Malaysia;

Hon. Members of Parliament for both houses of Malaysia Parliament;

Respected Presiding Officers;

Excellencies High Commissioner;

Distinguished Guests, Colleagues and Friends.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning. Allow me to extend a warm welcome to each and every one of you to this prestigious event, which is held for the first time in Malaysia and that too, I am proud to say, in my home State of Sabah.

2. It is indeed a great privileged to host this 23rd Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers and I am honoured to be given the opportunity to preside at this Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. At the outset, let me congratulate all the newly elected Speakers namely:

- a. HE TONY SMITH
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AUSTRALIA
- b. HE GEOFF REGAN
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, CANADA
- c. HE MR TIMOTHY LE COCQ
SPEAKER, JERSEY
- d. HE NTIHOI MOTSAMAI
SPEAKER, LESOTHO
- e. HE MDM HALIMAH YACOB
SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT, SINGAPORE
- f. HON. KARU JAYASURIYA
SPEAKER, SRI LANKA; AND
- g. HON. MDM. SUMITRA MAHAJAN
SPEAKER LOK SABHA, INDIA

and extend a warm welcome to them in joining this esteemed office. Similarly, in the same breadth, I would like to thank those who have left their respective Speakership, for having always risen to the occasion in rendering much assistance and providing their personal commitment to CSPOC.

Distinguished Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. We have come a long way, since the inception of CSPOC exactly 45 years ago, in 1969. This year's Conference and the scheduled workshops would further reflect our commitment to further promote and enhance the noble intentions and objectives enunciated during the formation of CSPOC. This Conference, is a continuation of all that has been initiated. I am positive that we will work together to promote Parliamentary democracy not only within the confines of the Commonwealth but beyond Commonwealth as well.

5. You will all certainly agree with me in totality, that the strength and resilience of any Parliament lies in, and is solely dependent on the leadership, the Prime Minister or the President, as the case may be. It is the unflinching support that he or she extends to the respective Speaker that enables the Speaker to exercise his duties and play his role in an unfettered, fair and just manner. We in Malaysia have been very fortunate in that the current Prime Minister and his Deputy have constantly and continuously lent their ears and have been pillars of support when we in Parliament were faced with challenges.

6. With your kind permission, Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, allow me to state here a few political facts, for the benefit of guest/delegates. The Malaysian Prime Minister has been sensitive to the Legislature's murmurs and needs as he himself comes from an illustrious lineage of Legislators. He has the distinction of being the grandson of the first Speaker of Malaysian Parliament, Tun Haji Mohamad Noah bin Omar. In addition to this, the Prime Minister's father rose to become the second Prime Minister of Malaysia. As they say, the apple does not fall very far from the tree.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. On 23 January 1971, the second Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein had, when he addressed the UMNO General Assembly as its new President, said and I quote:

'We can take pride in our sincerity and our readiness to uphold the concepts of Parliamentary democracy and our determination to practice it'.

8. Having been raised in such a conducive environment where the tenets of Parliamentary Democracy have been instilled and championed, we can be assured with a certain degree of certainty, that the Malaysian Prime Minister will truly support our cause not only today, but for as long as he is the Prime Minister of Malaysia. He has been enthusiastic and has been a stimulant in enhancing the prestige of the Malaysian Parliament.

9. And you Sir, as the Deputy Prime Minister is no less supportive of our cause. Your gracious presence here, this morning to inaugurate this Conference, certainly lends credence to the fact that you too is equally sensitive to our needs, if not more so.

10. As the Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on the Transformation of the Parliament of Malaysia, you have been a catalyst towards not only the transformation but the progress of the Malaysian Parliament as well. Out of the four recommendations we had submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Transformation of Parliament, the Cabinet Committee at its meeting chaired by you, Sir on 7 January 2016, graciously accepted three recommendations and one recommendation has been put in abeyance for further scrutiny.

11. Amongst the recommendations which have been accepted are :

- a) Notice of Questions – days for submission of questions has been decreased, from 14 to 10 days and an extension of seven days' notice on current issues prior to the sitting of Parliament;
- b) Setting up of a Special Chamber; similar those practiced in Australian Parliament and the House of Commons in England; and
- c) Ministerial Question Time with 24 hours notice.

12. This is a reflection of the commitment of both the Prime Minister and his Deputy and echoes precisely their sense of responsibility towards enhancing and transforming the Malaysian Parliament. They are both men who do not merely believe in rhetoric but deliver to their fullest ability.

Distinguished Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. We have come to this Conference with the sober reminder still fresh in our minds of some of the unpleasant events of the year 2015. However, January seems to remind us of new beginnings. It is pertinent that we look forward and broaden our horizons in some form. We all have dreams for our respective Parliaments.

14. Some of us would want to reform Parliament and enhance its battered image and have been working towards this objective, yet some of us are concerned about Parliaments' sanctity and security, all of us want to protect Parliaments' sovereignty and privilege, some of us are dismayed at the unbecoming behavior of certain Parliamentarians in the august House and some want to pursue the cause of the Rule of Law and Separation of Powers, that was expounded 800 years ago in the Magna Carta, and which is a vital ingredient for Parliamentary Democracy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

15. We Speakers of Parliament can take pride, in the fact that we hold strongly to a policy of friendship and co-operation, with all countries irrespective of their way of life or their political system. We play the role of 'ambassadors' for our respective countries. One of the concerns often raised is the overlapping roles of the Executive and the Legislature. This seems to be more pronounced in smaller democracies. Despite us being referred to as '**Speakers**', actually in our role, we are listeners. However, we Speakers have the privilege of being able to 'whisper' into the ears of the Prime Minister and his Deputy. In this regard, we can pride ourselves as being the 'conscience' of the Executive.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

16. Whilst we aim for Legislative accountability and transparency, the advent of a high level of technology and the social media has rather unfortunately at times, exposed

the Legislature and us Speakers in particular to much skepticism and cynicism, and being unfairly judged. Lopsided airing of sittings, has given rise to a deepening disenchantment/disappointment with the Legislature amongst the general public. It is we Speakers who can build a bridge between the public's perception and the reality of the situation. Whilst we may want to lament on the changing times, the reality, Ladies and Gentlemen, is that **Change is a Companion of Life.**

17. Hence, as we face a future full of challenges, we need to adopt a new attitude, a new thinking and a new image and conform to the needs of a new era. The challenges facing us are many. However, we have been able to stand on our feet and confidently ensure our sovereignty and safeguard our security and independence. I am sure we will continue to do so.

18. Let us pick each other's brains, figuratively speaking, that is, and let us debate, discuss and deliberate practically for the next few days that we are gathered here. May you have very meaningful and fruitful discussions. I hope that thus far you have not been disappointed with the arrangements that we have made specifically for you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

19. Allow me once again to say a '**Selamat Datang**' to all of you to our magnificent ***Land Below The Wind***. As I had promised in New Zealand, I have tried my level best to fulfill my assurances to expose all of you to the culture, warmth and untainted beauty of Sabah.

20. I am positive that all of you will carry home with you, fond memories of your short stay here. I am convinced that you will certainly want to return here again. Sabah is a true reflection of all and **EVERYTHING** that is Malaysian. You must have had a taste of it the past two days. I can assure you the best is yet to come. So do stay a little longer and drink to the brim the tranquility that Malaysia has to offer.

21. In this respect, I must pay tribute to the Speaker from New Zealand for taking this opportunity and arriving early to see and experience for himself if the assurances I had given in New Zealand have been fulfilled.

Distinguished Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen,

22. I wish to whole-heartedly thank the very kind Chief Minister of Sabah for his unfledging support for this Conference. I must not fail to show our deep appreciation to the incumbent Speaker of the Sabah State Legislature, the Honourable Datuk Syed Abas Syed Ali and his staff who worked very hard and gave us their full cooperation to make this Conference a resounding success.

23. We are deeply indebted to the State Secretary of Sabah YBhg. Tan Sri Sukarti Wakiman for instilling and ensuring a sense of co-operation between the Federal and State officers, which is reflected in today's Conference.

24. A word of appreciation is owed to Datu Rusmadi Sulai, The General Manager of the Sabah Cultural Board and their dancers for their mesmerising and captivating traditional performances which will remain etched in our memories for a long time.

25. I take this opportunity to extend our profound gratitude to the Royal Malaysian Police Force/the PDRM, for working relentlessly around the clock in ensuring that maximum security and protection is provided to all of us.

26. I would like to put on record here as well, my gratitude to the officers who have worked tirelessly and diligently to make this Conference a reality. Allow me to extend our apologies for any shortcomings that may arise. Just inform us and we will seek to remedy them immediately and make your stay here as pleasant as possible.

Thank you.

Wabillahi taufiq walhidayah wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh