

**INAUGURAL DIVERSITY AND  
INCLUSION YOUTH CAMP 2012 :**

**"OPEN HEARTS AND MINDS"**

**Assalamu alaikum warahmatullahi  
wabarakaatuh, Salam Sejahtera,  
Good Morning,**

**It is a pleasure for me to be here this  
morning and to be part of this  
inaugural youth camp. I am also  
delighted to know that so many young  
people, from Malaysia and from other  
countries, are here too.**

**It is indeed important for us all to try  
and understand each other, and being  
here, at this youth camp, is one way  
to do so.**

**It is said that "No man is an island" and that is very true about the times we live in now. Great advances in technology and telecommunications give us access to social websites on the Internet, Twitter, Skype and news updates every second.**

**Because of the easy access to news item and world events, we become witnesses to events which show that racial and religious tensions remain a huge problem that have not been overcome in many countries and has led to civil wars and international armed conflicts.**

**It is also so much easier to travel or to study in a different part of the world.**

**We are linked to each other in so many different ways, and we now have greater knowledge about people from different parts of the world, for example, all of us can read about the Arab Spring that began last year in our newspapers and on the Internet. News channels on television also give us images of what has happened in the Middle East.**

**Diversity is a fact of life for all of us as global citizens. We can no longer live in a bubble and ignore the diversity which exists in our own country or around the world. And it is the young people of today who must try to understand, accept and embrace diversity and to do so better than how we have done so. We should accept that we are all of different races and religions rather than just tolerating**

**each other, because acceptance means we are ready to acknowledge and respect each other's diversity.**

**I have seen the film "Gaduh" which I have been told all of you will be watching later, and I would like to share with you part of what I said at a lecture at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) at a language conference last year because it explains how conflicts, such as in the film, begin :**

**In their book, "Conflicts Across Cultures", Michelle Le Baron and Venashri Pillay write :**

***"People in conflict often converge into camps split between perceived good and evil, right and wrong, just***

*and unjust. Once the split begins, mistrust may grow, deepening the rift between 'our side' and 'their side.' A sense of 'we-ness' and 'they-ness' emerges. Those within the same group look for more reasons to distrust the other side and trust their own. As the parties' attitudes become rigid, they feel more confident in predicting that the other side will grow increasingly evil, uncompromising, and offensive, while their side will remain good, generous, and defensive."*

**At this Youth Camp, instead of perpetuating the idea of "we" and "them", I would like to suggest that we try our best to change intolerance**

**into understanding, altering entrenched and narrow views to a broader understanding of our fellow citizens and global citizens with whom we share this delicate world.**

**I would like to use another example from the same book ("Conflicts Across Cultures") which is a description of post-apartheid South Africa, and one which I think may indeed describe our own country :**

***"The rainbow is the image most closely associated with post-apartheid South Africa...A rainbow's beauty does not come from complete unification or blending of the different colors; instead, its magnificence is***

*revealed in the way that the colors complement and harmonize with each other...each color's individuality, uniqueness, and brightness is not lost. In fact, it is the complete rainbow that makes the individual colors more visible. This image...introduces the South African idea of ubuntu, which means 'I am because we are.' From this image, we remember that unity is not uniformity or sameness, but harmony in the midst of diversity."*

**Let us all try to be united in our efforts to accept and embrace diversity. And let us start doing so here at this youth camp.**

**Thank you.**

**Wabillahi taufiq walhidayah,  
wassalamu alaikum warahmatullahi  
wabarakaatuh.**