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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

NIK NAZMI NIK AHMAD

**MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT AND
CLIMATE CHANGE**

6TH MALAYSIA – NETHERLANDS WATER DIALOGUE

“WATER AND CLIMATE CHANGE”

1 NOVEMBER 2023 | 4.30 P.M.

ASIAN INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION CENTRE (AIAC)

KUALA LUMPUR

a) The Honourable Mark Rutte

Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

b) YB. Dato' Sri Huang Tiong Sii

Deputy Minister

Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change
(NRECC)

c) Ms. Eva Oskam

Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Malaysia

d) YBhg. Dr. Ching Thoo A/L Kim

Secretary-General

Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change
(NRECC)

Representatives from Federal and State agencies, speakers, foreign delegates, water operators, business leaders, academics, non-governmental organisations, distinguished guests.

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and good afternoon to you all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It gives me great pleasure to be here today at the **6th Malaysia –Netherlands Water Dialogue**. The **Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change (NRECC)**, in collaboration with the **Netherlands Embassy** in Kuala Lumpur have been organising this annual Dialogue since 2018. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to our counterparts from the Netherlands Embassy who have been closely working together with our predecessor Ministries and us over the years.

2. Today is additionally special as we have with us **The Honourable Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of the Netherlands**. Welcome back to Malaysia and thank you, sir, for gracing us with your presence. We greatly appreciate the commitment from the Government of the Netherlands towards our cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cooperation with the Netherlands Government

3. Malaysia and the Netherlands have had a close bilateral relationship over the years. Apart from the yearly dialogue, the NRECC and the Netherlands Embassy have been engaged in various collaborations focusing on water-related disasters and climate change resiliency. The most recent one has been the assistance in tackling water disasters rendered to us by the **Dutch Surge Support (DSS) scheme**. The outcome of this programme is the report by the **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)** team which highlighted the gaps, challenges,

and recommendations to improve Malaysia's flood risks that further strengthens our response to future flood risks and related climate change impacts.

4. We look forward to expanding the collaboration, specifically in developing pilot projects that can be implemented based on the recommendations from the DRR Team report as well as other programmes in the area of flood mitigation and climate resiliency.

A Snapshot of Malaysia's Water Sector

5. Allow me to share with you the state of play of our current water sector. As of 2022, water supply access coverage stood at **97.1% in urban areas and 97.0% in rural areas**. Meanwhile, **sewerage services covered 85.4% of the main cities**. By the end of **2025**, we aim to reach **98% coverage of clean water for rural areas and 87.5% for sewerage coverage**. Malaysia is committed to achieve these targets in line with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 6**, to ensure access to clean water and sanitation for all.

6. To achieve the goals, we are focusing on **four (4) key initiatives** as follows:

- (i) ensuring **continuous and adequate supply of water** and resources through **the systematic planning of water infrastructure**;
- (ii) addressing **financial sustainability** of the water operators;
- (iii) increasing **operational efficiency** of the water industry; and

- (iv) **climate resiliency**, focusing on **flood mitigation** and **coastal protection**. Apart from that, we are also guided by the **Water Sector Transformation (WST) 2040**. Aside from that, it strives to position the water sector as a dynamic growth engine while ensuring water security for all.

7. To stress our seriousness in providing access, a significant amount of funds have been allocated in the 2024 Budget to address water issues in states with major water problems i.e.: **Kelantan, Sabah and the Wilayah Persekutuan Labuan**. This is part and parcel of the several actions that the Ministry will take in the implementation of the “**Madani Economy: Empowering the People**” economic framework, specifically on *Focus 2 – Elevating the quality of the Rakyat’s life*.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Water and Climate Change

8. I would like to go into the importance of our discussion today, which is centred around the theme of “**Water and Climate Change**”. The **Synthesis Report** of the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report** stated that climate change has reduced food security and affected water security, hindering efforts to meet SDGs. Roughly half of the world’s population currently experience severe water scarcity for at least part of the year due to a combination of climatic and non-climatic drivers.

9. The disruption of weather patterns leads to extreme weather events where most disasters are water related. Around 74 per cent of natural disasters between 2001 and 2018 were water related, including

droughts and floods. The frequency and intensity of such events are only expected to increase with climate change. In the case of Malaysia, we are blessed with equatorial rainforests and bathed by the monsoon which stands as an epitome of tropical abundance. However, rising temperatures exacerbate the already high humidity levels, increasing evaporation rates and affecting water reserves. The altering patterns of the monsoon, with its unpredictable downpours, pose flood risks to urban areas and threaten agriculture, one of the backbones of the nation's economy. Therefore, for us, it is evident that water is central to the climate crisis, and that is why we are having this discussion on this platform today.

10. The climate situation presents a looming challenge to future safe water access. When disasters hit, it can destroy or contaminate entire water supplies, which poses health risks to the public due to the spread of waterborne diseases. Considering this, improving the resilience of water and sanitation services, and protecting ecosystems will be key to water security in ensuring safe water access for all.

11. With this belief, we have put forth our stand at the **United Nations 2023 Water Conference** in New York earlier this year, co-chaired by the Netherlands and the Republic of Tajikistan, that there is a need for a framework for resilience, and it must start with water, **where the imperatives of** climate, environment, and development merge. The world needs to shift how development is approached in the age of crises, where climate and disaster risks, and economic growth must be planned together.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Conclusion: Potential Collaboration for Water with the Netherlands

12. I hope that through our cooperation with the Netherlands, we will be able to continue to learn from each other on how to overcome this challenge. We hope to especially learn from the Netherlands' experiences as a low-lying country, which has been successfully living with water. The intricate network of dykes, canals, and pumps that the Dutch have ingeniously constructed over centuries showcases their mastery over water management. Nevertheless, climate change, with its threat of rising sea levels and increased precipitation, will bring forth an amplified challenge to Dutch water management strategies—as such, we hope to also understand how it is dealing with these new dangers.

13. As His Excellency Prime Minister Rutte said at the UNGA in September 2022: “...*collaborating on water issues presents us with a big opportunity to make the world safer, healthier and more prosperous. Investing in water security should be a top priority for our common future...It can and must be a turning point. Because it's now or never.*”

14. I do not intend to prolong my speech as time is of the essence. We will deliberate further on the potential areas of cooperation with the Netherlands in our dialogue session after this. I merely wish to conclude by reiterating that the Ministry takes our commitment to provide access to a reliable, sufficient, clean, and quality water supply at an affordable cost to all Malaysians very seriously. To achieve this, our management

strategies will be aligned to achieve sustainability as well as addressing the climate resilience aspects.

15. Finally, I would like to congratulate the organising committee from the Ministry as well as the Netherlands Embassy for the success of the event today. I look forward to having a fruitful discussion with His Excellency the Prime Minister after this.

Wabillahi Taufik Walhidayah, Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

Thank You.