

**SPEECH BY YB TAN SRI DATUK CHONG KAH KIAT
DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER OF SABAH/MINISTER OF TOURISM, CULTURE
AND ENVIRONMENT
3rd SABAH ENVIRONMENTAL
RECOGNITION NIGHT 2005
9TH JULY 2005
GRAND BALLROOM, MAGELLAN WING,
SUTERA HARBOUR RESORT**

Yang Berhormat Datuk Hj Karim Hj Bujang,

Assistant Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment;

Yang Berbahagia Datuk Monica Chia,

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment,

Yang Berbahagia Datuk Adeline Leong,

Organising Chairman of the 3rd Sabah Environmental Recognition Night 2005

Yang Berusaha Encik Burhan Rasit,

General Manager of PETRONAS,

Distinguished Guests, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good evening to you all,

Once again, it is a great pleasure for me to be here with all of you this evening for the **3rd Sabah Environmental Recognition Night 2005**. Two years have passed since we paid tribute to a number of deserving recipients for their outstanding contribution in efforts to protect, conserve or to enhance our environment.

Tonight the time has come for us once again to commend and honour outstanding individuals and organisations for their selfless contribution and commitment in enhancing the protection and conservation of the environment in Sabah.

The presence of so many distinguished guests, corporate figures and leaders in the private and public sector, business community and non-governmental organisations this evening is a testimony of the respect and concern for our environment that we must protect and conserve for our continued existence on this planet. I would like to specially record my sincere appreciation to our special guests – the teachers and students of schools around the city of Kota Kinabalu who have graciously accepted my personal invitation to be with us on this very special occasion.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme of this year awards “**One Earth One Life One Future**” serves as a salient reminder of the symbiotic relationship of man with nature and the environment. All life on earth in its various forms is fundamentally dependent on appropriate human activities and sustainable use of environmental resources. We all live in a shared environment irrespective of where we live in the world. To secure a favourable future for mankind as well as to enhance the quality of life both present and future generations, sufficient thought and action must be given to the sustainable management and use of these resources.

We must inculcate sincere and caring values, and sensitive attitudes at all levels of society in all matters or activities concerning the environment. In implementing programmes and carrying out economic activities we need to understand that while development meets the needs of the present generation it must not compromise the needs of future generations.

The key to sustainable development is basically maintaining an appropriate balance between development and conservation. In fact, environmental management is essentially managing human activities so as to minimize adverse impacts on the environment.

As we all live in a shared environment we are all stakeholders, and therefore are all, individually and collectively, are responsible to safeguard and protect our environment. While we may play a watchdog role it is not enough to criticize or condemn others for irregular and illegal activities and actions.

We need to be proactive and not be just armchair critics. I have on many occasions reiterated that the protection of the environment is not just the responsibility of the government. It is the collective responsibility of all citizens of our state and our country as well as of the world because the environment is our natural heritage which we have to protect for our well being and also for the benefit of the future generations.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sustaining the environment means instituting measures in order, for instance, to mitigate the degradation of rivers and streams, improve marine and ground water quality, and protect ecologically sensitive areas. Our natural resources need to be properly and judiciously managed. Greater care needs to be exercised especially in the utilisation of our land and natural resources as the rate of natural resource consumption and the rate of waste generation are together exceeding the capacity of the environment to replenish or to absorb the waste produced.

At the same time, there is a need to establish a network of protected areas to provide a buffer for natural calamities and maintain environmental stability particularly in the light of the catastrophic impacts of the devastating environmental phenomenon, the **TSUNAMI** which occurred in December last

year and affected several countries facing the Indian Ocean. We need to conserve our rich biodiversity which constitute an integral part of our tourism industry by protecting threatened as well as endangered species of flora and fauna, and preserving unique landscapes and other aspects of the natural and cultural heritage of the State.

In this respect I would like to draw attention to some aspects of environmental governance, which in simple terms, refers to how we as a society deal with the environment as part and parcel of our daily lives. Environmental governance plays a key role to balance the forces of degradation and sustainable development. Good environmental governance should aim to mitigate and ameliorate the consequences of development upon the environment. At the same time, it should aim to protect environmental quality as well as protect what is rare and endangered.

The government has instituted an array of environmental laws, rules and regulations to govern and protect the environment. However, the practice of good environmental governance demands, among others, accountability, transparency, partnership and cooperation at all levels of the society be it at the individual, government, corporation or community level within the context of the rule of law. In good environmental governance the views of minorities must be taken into account and the voices of the most vulnerable in society must be heard in decision-making.

At the same time it should also be responsive to the present and future needs of society. Individuals can contribute to help protect and preserve our environment in several ways. Activities such as proper disposal of garbage, recycling of waste, minimising the use of materials which pollute the environment are examples of how every citizen can assist in the caring of the environment. In this regard, we need to continue to educate the populace and make everyone aware of the importance of conserving and protecting the environment and how they can contribute to maintaining a clean and healthy environment. These two attributes must permeate all our activities and lifestyles no matter where we live, what we do.

We need to subscribe to the principles that every individual has a moral and ethical responsibility, for instance, to keep the land fertile, the atmosphere clear and clean, the water unpolluted, and the natural resources capable of yielding raw materials and products to meet the requirements of sustainable development. We need to recognize that we are part of a complex ecosystem and that we have to manage our activities, products and services to minimise any adverse impacts on the environment in order to sustain our life support systems.

On the other hand, the business and corporate sector are in a strong position to make significant contributions to good environmental governance because they have a management system for allocating resources to the best advantage which can also be applied to provide care for the environment. They can play a major role in ensuring that utilisation of natural resources are carried out in a sustainable manner. In this respect, I am very happy to note that big corporations such as PETRONAS have come forward to support and contribute their resources towards good environmental governance.

On the prevention of environmental pollution, the industrial sector today faces tremendous challenges from the need to satisfy society's material demands whilst minimising environmental pollution. In this regard, industries should therefore move towards more efficient processes of production, adopt cleaner technologies and processes throughout the life cycle of the product in order to minimise and avoid waste generation. Cleaner production includes conserving raw materials and energy, eliminating toxic raw chemicals and reducing the quantity and toxicity of emissions or discharges before they leave the production process.

One of the approaches of good environmental governance is the implementation of the ISO 14000 Environmental Management System (EMS). EMS is an organisational structure which specifies the responsibilities, practices, procedures, processes and resources for implementing and maintaining sound environmental management within an organisation. It is an approach based on creating awareness within the organisation to seek for top management's commitment towards meeting regulatory requirements and managing activities with the most impacts on the environment. I would like to take this opportunity to urge the business and the industries in Sabah in particular the Palm Oil mills to adopt innovative approaches such as the EMS to efficiently manage their operations and improve environmental management and to address the current concern of effluent discharge into our river systems.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is also a great need to enhance the application of the various environmental management tools in development activities. Environmental impacts need to be factored into development activities as these can cause both short-term and long-term adverse effects on human life, and undermine potential economic opportunities, and subsequently may threaten the quality of life.

For instance, the environmental impact assessment (EIA) system has been widely applied throughout the world as an important tool of environmental governance. However, some regard EIA as an obstacle to development due to costs and time taken. It is actually an effective and efficient tool in environmental management because it brings together and consolidate the various aspects of

environmental governance such as planning, feasibility, implementation, monitoring, enforcement, accountability and sustainability. At the same time, the EIA process requires inputs from a wide range of skills and expertise ranging from the natural and physical sciences, engineering and health sciences; to the social sciences including geography, demography, sociology and economics. The success of the implementation of the system, however, lies on aspects of morality, accountability, transparency, participation and synergy among the relevant stakeholders. On the part of the government, I want to reiterate that there will be no compromise on the welfare of the environment because the attainment of sustainable development and our continued well being among others depend very much on how well we manage our environment.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this special evening, I wish to take this opportunity to record my sincere appreciation and thanks to many individuals and organisations for their untiring contribution in various capacities towards maintaining and enhancing environmental quality in the state. We have made great progress in our endeavours. But at the same time, many more pertinent environmental issues in particular those related to perennial problems of littering and maintaining cleanliness and littering still need to be urgently addressed.

I believe a long term strategy with continuing concerted and integrated efforts involving all levels of society, will reduce if not totally eliminate this problem. To the recipients of the various categories of the outstanding environmental awards 2005, I extend my sincere congratulations and to record my sincere thanks for your contributions to make this event a success. I hope the awards you received tonight will inspire you to greater heights to work harder for the betterment of the environment in Sabah and provide a model for others to emulate. To all other finalists of the awards, each and every one of you are also winners. I hope you will keep up the good work and continue to contribute towards conserving and protecting our environment.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to PETRONAS for their continued support and sponsorship of these outstanding environmental awards. I wish to record my thanks to Datuk Adeline Leong, Chairman of the Organising committee for ensuring the success of this event. A very special thanks too to all of you who are present here this evening for your support in making this event a special and memorable evening.

I also wish to take opportunity to record my sincere appreciation and a big thank you for a job well done to Puan Halimah Hassan, Director of Federal Department of Environment (DOE) Sabah Region who will be transferred to Kuala Lumpur to assume bigger responsibilities at the central level. During your short stay of two years in Sabah, you have made tremendous efforts and contributions in

addressing pertinent environmental issues towards enhancing environmental quality in Sabah. I hope you will have fond memories of us and wish you all the best in your new job as well as in your future undertakings.

On that note, it is my great pleasure to wish you all a pleasant and enjoyable evening. Thank you.