

His Excellency Prime Minister of Malaysia Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi
His Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen
Assalamu'alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh

All praise be to God who said “Eat the lawful and good things, we have provided for you, and have fear of Allah, Him in whom you believe”. Praise and prayers be to our Prophet, our Beloved, our Guidance, who guided us with all that is beneficial to us, which includes mercy in slaughtering, so that the food we consume is *halal* (lawful) and *tayyib* (good) as commanded by Allah.

It is the fear of God mentioned in this verse that has brought together this highly regarded congregation in today's halal forum. To the Muslims, halal represents taqwa (fear) of Allah, and determining the halal status represents a very important aspect in their lives. Therefore, non-Muslims need to take this matter into account when dealing with the Muslims. This is especially so since we now live in a global village and therefore must be concerned with the civilizations, religions and traditions that we share in common.

If halal is to the Muslims a matter of *aqidah* (religious belief), to the non-Muslims it is a form of trade and an expansion of the trade exchange circle among 1.5 billion Muslims, who represent a huge halal market: it is a huge market amongst the Muslim countries, and for the whole world as we make available halal food that conforms to Islamic beliefs. Halal and Haram are not only limited to food and beverage alone, rather it encompasses a number of dimensions which Imam Faisal had touched on in his speech pertaining to the types of halal. I hope the halal forum will stretch its scope to cover these other types of halal, with Allah's will.

Malaysia is in fact, one of the first countries –if not the first- to initiate such a large scale effort for the halal industry: by determining the halal status and expansion of the halal industry. Malaysia has organized this forum, the International Halal Integrity Alliance (IHI) and a number of other projects that are concerned with the halal industry and safeguards it. We express our gratefulness to Malaysia and especially, our utmost gratitude to the Prime Minister of Malaysia for his concern on a matter that is of extreme importance for the Muslims.

I am also thankful to the secretariat of the forum who has chosen me to chair the forum for this year and to succeed the past chairman Mr. Khairy Jamaluddin. I take this opportunity to extend my deepest appreciation to him for the services that he had offered during his chairmanship.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry has a membership of 57 international federations of Islamic chambers, with the affiliation of 700 Islamic chambers in various cities. These 700 Islamic chambers are affiliated by more than 55 million business owners. The Chamber has put together a proposal that contains a number of objectives and mechanisms to bring about economic upswing within the Islamic Ummah. This proposal has received a favorable approval from the Extra Ordinary Summit held in Mekkah and later at the summit conference held a few months back in Dakar. Among the objectives of this proposal is to uphold values, halal and

quality. A resolution at the Dakar conference emphasized that the Chambers is responsible for these three affairs. When the various chambers discovered that Malaysia is concerned with these matters, we decided not to begin from zero. Rather, we join hands together with Malaysia and its organizations to collaborate in executing this duty that is considered holy by the Muslims. This results in a great cooperation among this forum, IHI , Islamic Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Malaysia.

IHI comprises of diverse membership: governments, companies, organizations, individuals and all those who have put in effort in this field. No one's effort will be annulled, rather we shall work together hand in hand to protect this industry and to expand its market and to abide by the commands of Allah Who has made clear for us the food and beverage that are prohibited.

Such cooperation is vital for the whole Islamic World; in order to achieve quick and significant results and to avoid redundancy. In February 2009 in Jeddah, the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry will organize a conference -with God's will- for organizations responsible for standards and specifications from OIC countries to arrive at standards to be conformed to by IHI and all other bodies involved in the implementation these standards.

I repeat my gratitude to the Prime Minister and government of Malaysia, for his support to the Halal industry and IHI. I also express my thank for His Excellency's personal support and that of the government of Malaysia in supporting proposals from the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry in general, especially for supporting the International Zakat Organization. His Excellency has been kind to chair the Board of Trustees of this very significant mechanism in the lives of the Muslims for which zakat is the third tenet of Islam, and has made Kuala Lumpur the headquarters for International Zakat Organization. We extend our utmost gratitude and pray that his Excellency be rewarded accordingly by Allah for his services to Islam. Assalamu'alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh