

**SPEECH BY TUN MUSA HITAM AT THE
OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 2ND WIEF IN ISLAMABAD**

I am deeply honoured to stand before you today to be given the opportunity to speak at this 2nd World Islamic Economic Forum. My sincere gratitude goes to the Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the Government of Pakistan in particular the Prime Minister H.E. Shaukat Aziz, Minister Hina Rabbani Khar and the officials who have all worked so hard to make this Forum a resounding success that it is going to be. Let me also thank my colleagues of the WIEF International Advisory Panel, and all those institutions and individuals that have made this conference a reality. My special tribute goes to all of you participants that have come from near and far without whom this conference would not be possible.

In the process of spiritual growth, we the Muslim Ummah often forget that engagement in business ventures is in actual fact an excellent means to practise our faith. Business and trade can be said to be one of the best means that countries can really be at peace with one another through the existence of intricate economic links that inevitably bind those societies together. Such is the enormous influence that economic cooperation and business partnerships wield.

We need, however, to transcend the rhetoric. We need to take responsibility to materialize these lofty ideals. The rationale behind the World Islamic Economic Forum (WIEF) is very simple: Muslims are important constituents of the world today due to their sheer size and predisposition towards peace, justice and prosperity. As such, there is

an urgent need to transform the Muslim world into a viable and competent domain that is able to live up to that very predisposition.

Yet, in doing so, another logic comes into place. Namely that Muslims are part of the globalised world where every aspect of one's life, be it political, economic or cultural, is invariably interconnected to each other. As the logic goes, any effort in trying to consolidate Muslim competency while completely ignoring the existence of the non-Muslim world, is an exercise in futility. As such, we need to capitalise on this reality.

Much has been said these days of the need for dialogue between civilizations, particularly between the Muslim and non-Muslim world. While discussions still continue of the practicability of these dialogues and even on how to go about it, may I humbly make one submission.

I submit that one of the most powerful means of creating dialogue to achieve understanding through interaction and contacts is through business relationships in all its forms. These, to me, are indeed forms of dialogue, but dialogues of action!

Business partnerships are powerful forms of dialogues simply because it is an effective way to bind societies together, given a common objective towards prosperity. As such, it is these realizations that continue to spur the spirit of the WIEF. This, I believe, is one of the most compelling ways in which we can convey to the world, that Islam is indeed a

religion of peace, tolerance and prosperity but, more important, through diligence, hard work and spiritual strength.

We need to confess that we often fall short of implementing what we aspire to achieve.

We need to prove to the world that a dream should not be a jurisdiction of the mind.

At the last meeting in Kuala Lumpur, two full-fledged active task forces, the World Islamic Businesswomen Network (WIBN) and the World Islamic Education Trust (WIET) were established. Two memoranda of understanding (MOU) will be signed today on seemingly insignificant, but structurally important areas of collaboration that will benefit the Muslim world. I need to point out though, that the importance of these MOUs does not lie in the signing of it, but rather the sustainability of its collaboration projects.

These are small steps towards a higher goal. We need to start realistically with small but sure and firm steps. We intend to continue to spur the activities of the existing initiatives in small but carefully designed programmes.

This afternoon, two concurrent roundtables were held for the WIEF women and young entrepreneurs. The objectives of these roundtables is to pursue the idea of establishing a global Muslim entrepreneur network, in order to facilitate information and trade exchanges between the young Muslims, and a training centre for women entrepreneurs, to enable Muslim women entrepreneurs to be equipped with relevant competencies and skills. Both of these objectives would focus primarily on SMEs as a reliable engine of growth for the Muslim world, particularly considering the steady rise of the role of SMEs

as exemplified by the recent Forbes edition of the top 200 list of SMEs in Asia. These ideas shall be duly looked into and followed up with specific programmes of action.

The WIEF is at the forefront of an extremely crucial political and economic trend. I submit that while governments of Islamic countries need to commit themselves and facilitate the programmes of the WIEF, it is the private sector, as represented by most of you present here today that needs that firm commitment, that firm support and that listings of programmes of action, through the WIEF, I believe we could realise our aspirations, together, for a better Muslim world that we all aspire to, Insha Allah.

Thank you.

ISLAMABAD

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