

**OPENING REMARKS BY**

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On the occasion of  
The 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the ASEAN Plus Three  
Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR) Council

Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015  
Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam

Bismillahahir Rahmaneer Raheem

Distinguished APTERR Council Members and Representatives,

Delegates, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

**Assalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakaatuh**

Good morning and salam sejahtera.

Praises be to Allah Subahanahu Wataala, selawat and salam to our prophet, Nabi Muhammad Sallallahu Alaihi Wassalam. Alhamdulillah, with the gracious blessings of Allah Subahanahu Wataala, we are able to gather here this morning.

Let me begin by thanking the organiser for inviting me to be the Guest of Honour and to deliver an Opening Remarks at this 3<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve Council Meeting and to host all of you here, in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam.

I like to extend a warm "**Selamat Datang**" or welcome to all of you, particularly our ASEAN + 3 delegates and guests. I am indeed honoured and it is a pleasure to be here.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Food security remains as one of the main challenging issues faced by the international community. The issues on food security and food safety has never failed to take centre stage of attentions at meetings, conferences, forums and workshops involving issues of humanity concerned caused by natural catastrophes, political and socio-economic upheavals. A national food security concern at one corner of the globe will subsequently affect nations at the opposite corners. As such, failure to address the issues will cause unaccountable degree of human tragedy and social commotions. When a widespread shortage of basic foodstuffs occurred worldwide in early 2007 and 2008, global commodity prices for wheat, rice, corn and soybean roughly tripled within a matter of months.

We, in the Asian region is not spared from these issues and substantial initiatives have been taken to address food security issues, which include, improving closer collaboration between the government and the private sectors.

The Establishment of ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve as a permanent mechanism is envisioned to provide a more solid platform of regional response to food shortages under emergency circumstances and also for achieving humanitarian purposes.

I was informed that since the preparatory stage in 2011 until its establishment and operation in 2013; APTERR has distributed more than 880 MT rice, under the Tier

3 programme, for humanitarian purposes to Lao PDR, Indonesia and the Philippines. APTERR has also distributed around 6,730 MT of Rice Donated by the People's Republic of China, Thailand, Malaysia and Japan to the Super Typhoon Haiyan affected area in the Philippines in 2013/2014. Beside that I was also made to understand that Japan has further donated 450 MT Rice to be stored in Cambodia and the Philippines for future use, and was expected to be dispatched to the said APTERR Parties in June 2015. May I take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the Government of Japan for the continuous support for APTERR operations, especially under the Tier 3 programme of APTERR.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

For Brunei Darussalam, our primary industries including agriculture is relatively small compared to those of other ASEAN member countries. Nevertheless, realizing the importance of ensuring food security in the country, we have put the agriculture and fisheries sectors as leading sectors in achieving a comfortable level of self-sufficiency in food production. At the moment, Brunei Darussalam is sufficient in poultry, eggs and vegetables, and we are currently poised to move into high technology and bio industries in the longer term leveraging our pristine forests and biodiversity, and working towards Increasing productivity at existing farms by incorporating high yielding varieties of crops and by introducing technological improvements like mechanization. The availability and accessibility of edible foods also fits neatly into the country's national development plan, Wawasan Brunei 2035.

In rice production for example, where our self-sufficiency level in 2014 was 4%, efforts are already in place to increase rice production through the various incentive schemes, such as buy-back program, improvement of infrastructures, technological support and capacity building to farmers and the adoption of advanced production technologies which resulted in higher yields and increase in productivity. The Department of Agriculture and Agrifood (DAA) is currently spear-heading these efforts by coordinating with various public and private entities to employ agro-industrial research and development efforts, such as selective breeding, tissue culture and cross-breeding. One of the most significant results of these efforts in terms of food security was the development and cultivation of new, more productive rice varieties. The first successful project was the creation of the local Laila rice variety, which was first introduced in April 2009 and can yield as much as 5 tonnes per ha, according to the Department of Agriculture and Agrifood. This was later followed by another locally developed hybrid rice, Titih, which can increase yields from an historical average of less than 2 tonnes per ha to an average of 5-6 tonnes per ha.

We believe that In Shaa Allah, with the cooperation and support of other relevant agencies including the private sectors and the farmers, we are confident that we will be making progresses despite the challenges faced to achieve our target in food production.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to note that the two-days meeting will discuss the various issues pertaining to the project implementation of the APTERR Agreement such as realization of work plan and budget plan for fiscal year 2014 and the proposed work plan and budget plan for fiscal year 2015. Beside that the meeting will also discuss on the work programme of the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the ASEAN Integrated Food Security (AIFS) Framework and the Strategic Plan of Action on Food Security (SPA-FS) that are related to APTERR. The AIFS Framework and SPA-FS has been developed as a strategic approach to addressing long-term food security and improvement of the livelihoods of farmers in the ASEAN region.

I am confident, with your collective knowledge and expertise, we could work together to address our challenges in achieving the ASEAN + 3 long-term food security mechanism.

Finally , let me take this opportunity to congratulate **Mr. Wiroj Saengbangka**, who has been appointed as the first General Manager of APTERR Secretariat. With your experience and broad knowledge, you will bring the secretariat into successful operations and I wish you all the best in your undertakings.

I also like to express our sincere appreciation to our development partners, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) Regional Office for their support, cooperation and collaboration in the programme and work plan related to APTERR.

In conclusion, allow me once again to offer our warm welcome to our delegates and guests. Please find time to explore and visit some of the interesting places in the country and enjoy your brief stay in Brunei Darussalam.

Last but not least, I would like to thank those involved in organizing this meeting, especially the APTERR Secretariat for providing the necessary assistance to ensure the success of this meeting.

With the Kalimah Bismillaahirrahmaneer Raheem, I now declare the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the ASEAN Plus Three Council open.

Thank you I wish you all a fruitful meeting

Wabillahi Taufik Walhidayah Wassalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh