

# **ICC CHAIRMAN VICTOR FUNG'S OPENING REMARKS**

## **6<sup>th</sup> WORLD CHAMBERS CONGRESS**

3 June 2009

Kuala Lumpur

The Honourable Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the 6<sup>th</sup> World Chambers Congress in this magnificent city of Kuala Lumpur. In many ways Malaysia and its capital, with its avant garde skyscrapers, vibrant market economy, and its predilection for innovation and entrepreneurship, symbolize the tremendous leap forward that so many Asian countries have made in recent years.

For centuries this captivating country has been home to the ancient Malay civilisation and host to Chinese and Indian commercial outposts. Arabian merchants introduced Islam in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and later it was ruled by succeeding waves of Portuguese, Dutch and English colonists until independence in 1957. Today Malaysia is a fascinating multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic patchwork that combines the best of both East and West in art, music, architecture, and gastronomy.

The International Chamber of Commerce and the World Chambers Federation are most happy to be here, and we are highly honoured by your presence, Deputy Prime Minister Right Honourable Tan Sri Muhyiddin Bin Mohamad Yassin.

I want to congratulate our hosts, the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers and the ICC World Chambers Federation, for doing such a marvellous job in bringing all of you together. This was a particularly difficult time to organize a Congress of such magnitude given the difficult economic conditions and widespread doubts that people would travel during this period.

Your presence here today – you number well over a thousand – is proof of the vitality of the World Chambers Federation. As I look out among you, I am struck yet again by the cosmopolitan nature of our organization, which brings together more than 14,000 chambers of commerce from all parts of the world.

I know that you will go back to your countries with contacts, projects, ideas -- and especially dreams. For that is what this Congress is all about, to exchange views on the best way of resolving problems, to learn from others, and to think about the future.

In this context, the theme of our Congress – “Leading sustainable growth and change” – is visionary indeed. Even as the world struggles to overcome the most serious economic recession since the

1930's, we cannot ignore the challenges of the future. The global trends in demographics, migration, industrialization and urban sprawl are leading to dangerous shortages in water, food and energy and global warming. These issues require a global solution and we will be discussing at this Congress how we can work together to bring change and to find a global solution.

The Congress will also include workshops on the Web 2.0 project, intellectual property, good governance, women in business and so many others that reflect the broad interests of the international business community.

This year marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Chamber of Commerce, founded in 1919 in the wake of the Paris Peace Treaty by a group of visionaries known as “Merchants of Peace.” We have much to be proud of over the course of the past nine decades in our history. We have promoted the concept of peace and prosperity through world trade and have championed a rules-based multilateral system. Through world trade, more than 600 million people – mainly in Asia – have been lifted out of poverty in the past 30 years. This is unprecedented in human history.

ICC is taking the opportunity of its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration not only to re-affirm our roots and our founders' vision, but also to renew ourselves as the world business organization. Through its members in more than 130 countries and its global network of chambers of commerce, ICC is in the unique position as the voice of global business.

In today's environment ICC has again assumed a leadership role by making sure that business voice is heard in relation to international trade. In this time of crisis, we need more trade, not less. For it is trade, the lifeblood of the global economy, that has driven growth during the past three decades, and it must do so again. We have spoken out against protectionism and we have advocated increasing the availability of trade finance.

Our voice is being heard in the major international forums, including the G20 and the G8. It is being heard by the many governments through our network of National Committees and chambers of commerce. The intellectual input to our views on trade and related issues is provided by our various policy commissions comprising experts from all over the world. This intellectual leadership will be further enhanced with the research commissioned by the newly founded ICC Research Foundation.

In closing let me say that we face not only a financial and economic crisis; but a crisis of confidence in our institutions and even in our way of life.

This is the time for all of us here, as business leaders, to play our part in ensuring that business contributes positively to change and sustainable growth. Our host country, Malaysia, is an example that life can get better and that hope and courage can triumph.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is now my great privilege to introduce to you our honoured guest and great friend of international business, the Honourable Najib Razak.