

**Rona Yircali speech for 6<sup>th</sup> World Chambers Congress opening ceremony**

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA

MAYOR OF KUALA LUMPUR

CHAIRMAN OF ICC

CHAIRMAN OF FMM

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

WELCOME TO THE 6TH WORLD CHAMBERS CONGRESS HERE IN KUALA LUMPUR.

IN THE NAME OF ICC-WCF IT IS A GREAT HONOUR FOR ME NOW TO HEREBY DECLARE THE CONGRESS OPEN. THE FIFTH WORLD CHAMBERS CONGRESS TOOK PLACE IN MY HOME TOWN, ISTANBUL. IT WAS CO-HOSTED BY THE UNION OF CHAMBERS AND COMMODITY EXCHANGES OF TURKEY AND I NOW INVITE, MUSTAFA BAYBURTLU ADVISOR TO THE PRESIDENT OF TOBB TO THE STAGE.

***Introduction***

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

IT IS PARTICULARLY PLEASING AND A TESTIMONY TO THE VALUE OF THE CONGRESS THAT DESPITE THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE AND ADVANCES MADE IN TECHNOLOGY, SO MANY OF YOU HAVE TRAVELLED TO ATTEND THE CONGRESS IN PERSON.

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE CONGRESS TEAM OF ORGANIZERS FROM FMM, WCF AND ICC FOR THEIR ORGANIZATION OF THE EVENT.

***Participation***

I AM PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT WE HAVE XX PARTICIPANTS FROM OVER 90 COUNTRIES AT THIS CONGRESS. THE DIVERSITY OF CONGRESS PARTICIPANTS AND SPEAKERS IS ONE OF ITS ATTRACTIONS. SOME HAVE TRAVELLED FROM AS FAR AWAY AS TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, BRAZIL AND FINLAND TO BE HERE.

I AM EQUALLY PLEASED THAT THE CONGRESS HAS THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE MALAYSIAN CHAMBER COMMUNITY.

I KNOW SOME OF YOU HAVE ATTENDED THE CONGRESS REGULARLY SINCE IT WAS FIRST HELD IN FRANCE IN 1999 AND IT IS GOOD TO SEE SO MANY RETURNING FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES.

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A MOMENT TO EXTEND A SPECIAL WELCOME TO THOSE OF YOU ATTENDING THE CONGRESS FOR THE FIRST TIME. PLEASE WOULD ALL PARTICIPANTS ATTENDING THE CONGRESS FOR THE FIRST TIME STAND FOR A BRIEF MOMENT.

PLEASE LET'S HAVE A ROUND OF APPLAUSE FOR OUR FIRST TIMERS.

WITH THANKS TO FUNDING FROM THE US CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL PRIVATE ENTERPRISE WE WILL ALSO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE WITH CHAMBER REPRESENTATIVES FROM AFGHANISTAN, BOTSWANA, INDONESIA, KENYA, MONGOLIA, MONTENEGRO, PAKISTAN, PANAMA, PARAGUAY, THE PHILIPPINES, AND RUSSIA.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE CONGRESS HAS RECEIVED GENEROUS CHAMBER SPONSORSHIP AND WE THANK THE BELGIUM FEDERATION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, THE DUBAI CHAMBER, THE ROMANIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY AND THE ROTTERDAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOR THEIR SUPPORT.

***WCF***

THE DIVERSITY OF PARTICIPANTS WE HAVE AT THE 6TH WORLD CHAMBERS CONGRESS AND THE DIVERSITY OF WCF MEMBERS REFLECTS HOW TRULY GLOBAL THE CHAMBER MOVEMENT IS.

CHAMBER HISTORY SPANS BACK OVER 400 YEARS AND TODAY THEY EXIST IN EVERY COUNTRY. ICC MEMBERSHIP COMPRISES A NOTABLE PROPORTION OF CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE. SUCH AN EXTENSIVE NETWORK REQUIRES A NEXUS TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION AND EXCHANGE. WCF IS THE BACKBONE OF THE CHAMBER COMMUNITY UNITING THE GLOBAL NETWORK OF 14,000 CHAMBERS AND THEIR BUSINESS COMMUNITIES. OUR ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS INVOLVE LOCAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL, BILATERAL, TRANSNATIONAL, AS WELL AS PUBLIC-LAW AND PRIVATE-LAW CHAMBERS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE RELY ON YOU AND THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN STRENGTHENING OUR CHAMBER

NETWORK AND HELPING US TO ENCOURAGE CHAMBER EXCELLENCE.

THE CHAMBER MOVEMENT REPRESENTS NOT ONLY INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL COMPANIES BUT ALSO SME'S. WCF RECOGNIZES THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF SMES AND THEIR VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE GLOBAL ECONOMY. AS ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL HUBS, MANY CITIZENS EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY RELY ON SMES. SMES NOT ONLY CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BY WAY OF TAX REVENUE AND EMPLOYMENT BUT THEY ALSO CONTRIBUTE TO INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY. THROUGH CHAMBER MEMBERSHIP, WCF ACTS AS THE COLLECTIVE VOICE FOR SMES WORLDWIDE, PROMOTING THEIR WORK AND HELPING THEM FACE THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF GLOBALIZATION.

***Congress theme***

THE THEME OF OUR CONGRESS 'MEETING GLOBAL CHALLENGES' HIGHLIGHTS THE MANY CHALLENGES WE, AS CHAMBER AND BUSINESS LEADERS FACE DAILY.

IT IS FITTING THAT WE GATHER HERE IN THE CITY OF KUALA LUMPUR FOR THIS EVENT. THROUGHOUT HISTORY KUALA LUMPUR HAS OVERCOME COUNTLESS TRIALS TO EMERGE MORE ADVANCED AND MORE PROSPEROUS THAN BEFORE.

AS CHAMBER LEADERS WE HAVE A CRUCIAL ROLE TO PLAY HELPING BUSINESS ADAPT TO THE CHALLENGES THEY FACE TODAY. BUSINESS NEEDS OUR PRACTICAL GUIDANCE, NOT ONLY TO SURVIVE THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN WE ARE CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING, BUT ALSO TO ADDRESS OTHER LONG-TERM ISSUES SUCH AS CLIMATE CHANGE AND OTHER ENVIRONMENT-RELATED ISSUES.

THE GLOBAL CHAMBER NETWORK IS A TRUSTED AND CREDIBLE POOL OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE. THE CONGRESS IS AN INTERACTIVE PLATFORM TO EXCHANGE SUCH INFORMATION, APPRAISE NEW IDEAS AND CONSIDER INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS. OVER THE NEXT THREE DAYS WE WILL LOOK AT WAYS IN WHICH CHAMBERS ARE WORKING WITH GOVERNMENTS TO COUNTER THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE. FOR EXAMPLE, IN OUR WORKSHOP ON PORTS WE WILL LEARN HOW CHAMBERS CAN HELP PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AS INTERNATIONAL TRADE EXPANDS.

IN OUR PLENARY SESSION ON FOOD, WATER AND ENERGY WE WILL ALSO SEE HOW CHAMBERS ARE CONTRIBUTING TO THE ATTAINMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS, TO REDUCE EXTREME POVERTY BY HALF, BY THE YEAR 2015. ON FRIDAY WE WILL ALSO RELEASE THE RESULTS OF OUR CLIMATE CHANGE SURVEY.

AS WELL AS OUR THREE PLENARY SESSIONS, THE CONGRESS PROGRAMME INCLUDES OVER 20 WORKSHOPS COVERING A BROAD RANGE OF ISSUES FROM INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY TO TRANSITION TO WEB 2.0.

OTHER WORKSHOPS WILL BRING US UP-TO-SPEED ON THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS SURROUNDING OUR DAILY ACTIVITIES INCLUDING: THE ATA CARNET SYSTEM, CERTIFICATES OF ORIGIN AND CUSTOMER SERVICE.

### ***Competition***

BECAUSE OF THE INNOVATIVE NATURE OF CHAMBERS IN FINDING PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO CHALLENGES, IN 2003 WCF INTRODUCED THE WORLD CHAMBERS COMPETITION. THE COMPETITION BRINGS TOGETHER CHAMBERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD AND HAS BEEN A HIGHLIGHT OF THE CONGRESS SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 2003. WITH AN EXTREMELY HIGH CALIBRE OF ENTRIES, I AM SURE THAT THIS YEAR WILL BE NO EXCEPTION. 47 PROJECTS FROM 33 COUNTRIES

WERE SUBMITTED THIS YEAR AND 19 FINALISTS ARE SET TO PRESENT THEIR PROJECTS TO THE JUDGING PANEL OVER THE NEXT THREE DAYS.

***Conclusion***

I WOULD LIKE TO CONCLUDE BY THANKING YOU ALL FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION AND CONTRIBUTIONS.

WITH SUCH AN EXTENSIVE PROGRAMME, I URGE YOU TO MAKE THE MOST OF WHAT WE HAVE ON OFFER AND ALSO TO SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE AND IDEAS WITH OTHERS.

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR TIME HERE DEVELOPING IDEAS, PARTNERSHIPS, PROJECTS, CONTACTS AND FRIENDSHIPS THAT CAN BE TAKEN HOME ALONG WITH YOUR CONGRESS MEMORIES.

***Introduce video message***

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WE ARE VERY HONOURED TO HAVE RECEIVED A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM FORMER U.S. PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON, WHICH I WOULD NOW LIKE TO PLAY FOR YOU.

THANK YOU