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**SPEECH BY HAJI SIDEK SANIFF, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE  
(ENVIRONMENT), AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL DA'WAH CONFERENCE 2000 ORGANISED BY  
DARUL ARQAM SINGAPORE ON TUESDAY, 19 SEP 2000, 9.15 AM AT  
MARINA MANDARIN SINGAPORE**

Hj Othman Haron Eusofe  
Minister of State for Manpower  
Bro Ridzuan Wu  
President of Darul Arqam Singapore

Bro Hashim Ibrahim  
Chairman, International Da'wah Conference Organising Committee

Hj Maarof Salleh  
President of MUIS

Sahibus Samaha, Syed Isa Semait  
Mufti of Singapore

Dato' Mohd Taha Arifin  
Honorary Secretary General of RISEAP

Tan Sri Abang Ahmad Urai

Dato' Jamil Osman  
Deputy Director, International Islamic University Malaysia

Ambassadors and High Commissioners of  
Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Pakistan and Egypt

Brothers and Sisters, Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalamu'alaikum wr wbk.

1 Our Prophet brought a new eternal world and spiritual revolution not only in religion but in the ways of life. He replaced heresay, drawing on the enquiring mind with knowledge. We are not mere consumers. We are producers. Islam learnt from the war captives after Badr about non-aqidah subjects, then years later gave the rest of the world the world of science. If there was a survey like the present one where Einstein was bestowed the title by Time Magazine as the Man of the 2nd Millennium, a Muslim would likely be given that title for the 1st Millennium among the like of Al-Khansa, Alghawarizhmi, etc.

2 The Islamic way of life gives full guarantee to progress and success to which one can aspire in the spiritual as well as secular field. The Prophet has declared that "This world is the tillage of the next world." We must continue with our dakwah - the work of nabuwah continues till the day of judgement. "Convey to others what you listen from me even if it may be a single verse" (Hadith). This 'planet' is not ours. Ours is the 'Planet Jannah'. We must avoid being homeless in this planet. The message of Allah worked through persuasion and have delivered discoveries and inspire the people with His message. "There is no compulsion – religion, the right direction has been made distinct from error" - (11.256).

3 This morning I would like to confine and focus myself to two important and crucial areas: Islam as the religion of peace and the need to discuss in depth the application of the principle of Islamic jurisprudence (Usul al-Fiqh).

4 Let me start by making an observation. Victors usually tend to be susceptible to two kinds of feeling – pride and vengeance. Nonetheless the Prophet of Islam – Muhammad (saw), after the famous conquest of Makkah (Fathu Makkah), displayed neither of these traits.

5 In this context, it is interesting to study some details of this remarkable event. The noted historian – Ibn Ishaq, informed us, when the Prophet entered Makkah, his head was bowed so low, that people saw his beard touching the camel's saddle. Such was the humility (tawaddu') of our beloved Prophet even in his hour of triumph.

6 Later on, there followed a conversation between the Prophet and the Quraysh:

“What do you think I am going to do with you now? “We think you will treat us well,” they replied, “for you are our noble brother and the son of our noble brother.” Then, the Prophet said: “I say to you as Joseph said to his brothers: Let no reproach be upon you this day. Go you are free!”

7 Clearly the Prophet had put vengeance aside, thus eliminating any possibility of an adverse reaction on the part of his new subjects. By granting a general amnesty, the Prophet nipped resistance in the bud.

8 When the Prophet entered Makkah after the conquest of the city, he gave his commanders orders not to do battle with anyone unless they themselves were attacked. He forgave all those who had committed outrages against him - only a few were to be executed for being guilty of specific crimes. Yet whomsoever of them sought forgiveness, or had someone pleaded on his behalf, was forgiven. None of those who appealed for clemency was prosecuted.

9 Here, it is very interesting for all of us to notice how enemies of Islam in Arabia could commit the most heinous crimes against the Muslims, and yet the Qur'an as the Book of Guidance when announced to the Mushrikun, stated that if they repented, they would be forgiven. Let us ponder upon this beautiful verse in Surah al-Anfal: 61 in which Allah (swt) says:

“If they incline to peace, make peace with them, and put your trust in God. Surely He is the Hearing, the Knowing. Should they seek to deceive you, God is all sufficient for you. He has made you strong with His help and rallied, and with the company of the believers.” (8:61-62)

10 One of those sentenced to death and then subsequently forgiven was 'Ikrimah ibn Abi Jahl. Along with his father he had been an active opponent of Islam, and had subjected the Prophet and his companions to all forms of persecution. However when news came that 'Ikrimah was coming to accept Islam, the Prophet told his companions not to insult 'Ikrimah's father "for abuse of the dead, hurts the living."

11 It was magnanimity such as this after the conquest of Makkah that turned Islam's most impeccable foes into staunch custodians of the faith. The conquest of Makkah, and later on, the hijrah of The Prophet to Madinat al-Munawwarah, confirm the fact that this religion commits to peace with all mankind. Wife of Abu Sufian, whom the Prophet said that whoever take sanctuary in his home would be safe, peeped through the window to see how many people in Makkah were persecuted. She was perplexed when she found all the warriors with tears in their eyes asking Allah for Hidayah to all the people, not only Makkah.

12 As a matter of fact, the Constitution of Madinah is the reflection of a pluralistic society par excellence. In the Constitution of Madinah, the aspect of peaceful living among all people – Muslims and non-Muslims were stressed. Indeed as the late Professor Ismail R. Al-Faruqi, a noted Islamic scholar, asserted, the Madinan Society in the time of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) accomplished a historical pact which was universally claimed as PAX-ISLAMICA.

13 It is our duty especially the 'ulama to ensure that the good name of Islam is upheld. Today the role of the 'ulama is becoming more and more challenging. Apart from the issue of a distorted image of Islam and Muslims – that Islam is the single most important threat to world peace and security - the 'ulama as the highest authority in the religion of Islam need to play their assertive role in making Islamic da'wah in the context of a globalised society, such as Singapore, and others, as effective as possible. Clearly, the 'ulama and Muslim intellectuals are required to undergo some process of tajdid (reform) in their Islamic thinking. The religion of Islam provides such avenue as long as it does not violate the teachings of Qur'an and Sunnah. As a matter of fact, contemporary 'ulama in the Muslim world have called us to understand the principles of permanent (thabit) and change (taghyir). To do this, it is imperative for our 'ulama and intellectuals, first and foremost, to widen their channels of communication and network. Through the effective way of relationship, a more concrete result can be realised. Without hesitation, we must allow the creation of 'an intelligent space' which is hopefully a genuine embodiment of the Islamic worldview and culture – a combination of heritage (al-

furath) and contemporary (al-mu'asir) will emerge.

14 Perhaps what is important is that all of us must possess sincerity, commitment (al-iltizam), consistent (al-Istiqamah), tolerance, self criticism, effective management, and other qualities of Islamic ethos. This is even more important in the context of countries where Muslims are the minority. It would be worthy of our effort if our 'ulama and Muslim scholars, perhaps with other ulam and mudari scholars from abroad, to discuss the wide ranging challenges that face the ummah and Islam's image.

15 As seeker of knowledge, it is relevant to cite some wisdom from one of Imam al Ghazali's wise men when he said: "Verily I pity no one as I pity the man who seeks knowledge but understand not and him who understands and seeks it not." May Allah (swt) bless all our good works for the betterment of all mankind.

16 Another important subject which we should seriously discuss here, is the application of the noted Principle of Islamic Jurisprudence (Usul al-Fiqh) in our daily lives. Alhamdulillah, our pious and knowledgeable doctors of Islam Shari'ah have contributed many relevant principles which can be applied at all times and in all places. One of those principles is al-dharurah - the principles of necessity in an emergency or extraordinary situation. The finding will be the critical benchmark of that sense of tolerance sometimes ignored by some while the majority keep their silence – the result of the "I am better than thou" era.

17 Of course, we do not intend to simplify this principle out of self-interests. Rather, we have to honour it because of special conditions – socio-politics, religion and cultural settings.

18 The specialist of this discipline, the Usiliyy, must work hand in hand with other scholars, experts and professionals to actualise that principle because Islam is the religion of simplicity, not the religion of difficulty.

19 Let us appreciate the view of as-Sheik Yusuf al-qaradawi – a prominent Muslim scholar who advocates the need for Muslim ummah, particularly the 'ulama to exercise fiqh al-awlawiyyat (fiqh of priorities), fiqh al-maslahah (fiqh of general benefits) and fiqh al-Muwazzarah (fiqh of equilibrium). In following his dynamic thinking, we should study in depth his thought besides other prominent scholars.

20 The notion of dharurah means an exercise of ijtihaad either individually or

collectively. Dynamism of Muslim Ummah in the very near future depends very much in our deep understanding of such principles of usul al-Fiqh. Perhaps, it is aptly correct for ‘Allamah Muhammad Iqbal – the noted Muslim’s thinker – to note that the principle of ‘Usul al-Fiqh is part and parcel of what he called “The Principle Movement in Islam”.

21 Perhaps we can all ponder the issues I mentioned. Locally, Darul Arqam, along with prominent Muslim scholars, could work with MUIS in a more elaborate discussion of the dharurat issue and the future of ulama and Islam in Singapore.

22 I would like to congratulate Darul Arqam for organising the International Da‘wah Conference where the Association has shown once again to be in the forefront in planning and organising Da‘wah programme where it will lead towards the enhancement of da‘wah field of study and activity. With the presence of prominent Islamic scholars, thinkers and academicians in this Conference, both local and foreign participants will certainly benefit immensely from the Conference sessions in the next three days.

23 Thank you.

Wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

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