WELCOME AND KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY
YB DATO’ SRI MAZNAH MAZLAN
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN, TOURISM MALAYSIA

SEMINAR ON MALAYSIA AS A PREFERRED BIRDING DESTINATION
CYBERVIEW SPA & RESORT
11 FEBRUARY 2015

SALUTATIONS:
TBA

INTRODUCTION AND PLEASANTRIES:

1. Firstly, please allow me to welcome everyone to this “Seminar on Malaysia as a Preferred Birding Destination 2015.” I am delighted to see this overwhelming/encouraging participation which clearly demonstrates the commitment and enthusiasm of all parties to position Malaysia as one of the world’s major birding destinations.

2. This is the first time that such a seminar is being held and Tourism Malaysia has taken this initiative to acquire the views and inputs from key industry partners on tourism in general, and bird watching potential in particular. The aim of this seminar is to develop strategic action plans to highlight Malaysia as one of the world’s premier birding destinations in accordance with the Government’s objective to establish Malaysia as a global biodiversity hub under EPP 4 of the Tourism NKEA.

MALAYSIA’S TOURISM PERFORMANCE:

MALAYSIA TOURISM PROMOTION BOARD
( MINISTRY OF TOURISM & CULTURE MALAYSIA )
No.2, Tower 1, Jalan P5/6, Precint 5, 62200 Putrajaya, Malaysia
Tel: +603 8891 8000; http://www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my
www.facebook.com/friendofmalaysia; twitter.com/tourismmalaysia; blog.tourism.gov.my
3. To begin, allow me to share with you Malaysia’s tourism performance thus far.

Tourist arrivals 2010-2013:
2010: 24.6 million
2013: 25.7 million
Compound Average Growth Rate (CAGR): 1.14%

Tourist receipts 2010-2013:
2010: RM 56.5 billion
2013: RM 65.4 billion
CAGR: 3.75%

Tourist arrivals Jan-Oct 2014:
22.9 million (+9.6%)
Target: 28 million

Tourist receipts Jan-Sept 2014:
RM 51.8 billion (+12.0%)
Target: RM 76.0 Billion

Target for 2015:
Tourist arrivals: 29.4 million
Tourist receipts: RM 89.0 Billion

4. We have done quite well for ourselves over the years and as a natural step in this tourism progression, we have also promoted Malaysia’s unique attractions to very specific audiences.

5. Malaysia’s niche tourism products such as the homestay experience, shopping and spa, golfing, fishing and so on, have received worldwide interest and have great potential for
growth. In fact, Malaysia has received specific accolades in these areas such as:

- Ulysses Award for the Malaysian Homestay Experience Programme, UNWTO, 2012
- Kuala Lumpur, the “New 7 Wonders Cities” in the world, 2014
- 4th Best Shopping Destination in the World, CNN Travel 2012/2013
- 4th Best Retirement Haven in the World, International Living, 2014
- Best Family Destination, Lonely Planet Travel Awards, 2014
- Asia’s Best Golf Destination, World Golf Awards, 2014

6. We are greatly encouraged by these recognitions and naturally, it is our goal to continue branding and promoting Malaysia’s unique tourist attractions as a premier experience to niche target markets.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON AVIFAUNA:

7. According to studies conducted by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), the global tourism industry is increasing at 4% annually whereas nature-based tourism is experiencing a rapid growth at 10-30%. This percentage generates around USD 200 billion a year and the bird watching industry alone is estimated to contribute USD 24 billion per annum.

8. This points to the fact that nature-based tourism activities are in great demand, and Malaysia, with its abundance of natural assets, stands to gain from it, provided that the right efforts are made to brand and market the country effectively.
9. Malaysia is blessed with an abundance of biodiversity, ranking 12th globally in terms of mega-biodiversity. Our incredible natural assets -- virgin jungle, beautiful islands, cool highlands, and more -- come together to provide the perfect habitat and ecosystem for the animal kingdom, not least our feathered friends.

10. Naturally, there is tremendous potential in ecotourism with a major focus on bird watching activities. A total of 795 species of birds have been recorded in Malaysia with over 60 species considered as endemic birds. The diverse bird population combined with the wonderful scenery and friendly people make any visit to Malaysia an unforgettable experience for the veteran or first timer birder.

**KEY MESSAGE: MALAYSIA AS A BIRDWATCHING PARADISE**

11. Malaysia has great potential to develop itself as the ultimate bird watching paradise for the following reasons:

12. **Malaysia’s diversity of bird species:**
    The world today has a total of 10,000 bird species where Malaysia has over 795 bird species, of which nearly 60% is in the state of Pahang and Langkawi Island. The variety of climates and habitats has resulted in this region becoming extremely diverse in terms of birds species.

13. **Malaysia’s location:**
    Our country also lies on the path of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway that provides strategic and important resting sites for migratory birds flying between wintering sites in Southeast Asia and Australia and the breeding sites in China, Japan, Korean, Mongolia and Siberia.

14. **Malaysia selected as Important Bird Area:**
For those who are not aware, there are nearly 12,000 sites in 218 countries identified as Important Bird Areas or IBA. For an area to qualify as an IBA, it must meet a set of standardized criteria based on the presence of species that are of worldwide conservation concern.

15. The Malaysian Nature Society has identified 55 Important Bird Areas in Malaysia, of which 18 are in Peninsular Malaysia. It was reported that the local birdwatching sites in Malaysia have recorded increasing numbers of bird watchers, pointing to the fact that more visitors acknowledge and are becoming receptive to the importance of nature and wildlife.

**KEY MESSAGE: PROMOTION OF MALAYSIA AS A BIRD WATCHING PARADISE**

16. In our bid to promote as well as to create awareness of Malaysia as a Bird Watching Paradise, we have participated and will continue to do so in international fairs such as the British Bird Watching Fair in Rutland and the Asian Bird Fairs and other relevant birding activities.

17. However, our promotion efforts have been strongly complemented by the private sector. We are heartened by the fact that private organisations and NGOs are leading the way in organising bird-related events such as Raptor Watch at Tanjung Tuan, the Fraser’s Hill International Bird Race and the Wing of Kuala Kubu Bharu. An effort by Malaysia Nature Society and its Bird Conservation Council to organise “My Garden Birdwatch” has also encouraged Malaysians of all ages to be more aware of the feathered treasures in their own backyard!

18. Kudos to all! I am confident that with all these initiatives in place and the public and private sector playing their roles, we can attract this niche group of bird lovers to return every year
to Malaysia, just like the migratory birds that return to Malaysia during their flight between wintering sites and breeding grounds.

CONCLUSION:

19. I hope that this 2-day seminar will be a fruitful effort in combining our knowledge and expertise, sharing concerns and feedback, to drive bird watching in Malaysia as a viable tourist attraction, to inspire our tourism trade members to develop and package quality birdwatching tours and activities.

20. At the same time, it is my sincere wish that efforts like this will convey a strong message of conservation to all to ensure long-term sustainability of our precious eco-tourism products.

21. Once again, on behalf of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to all and we seek your kind assistance to help us promote Malaysia as a tourist and birdwatching paradise among your local and foreign friends.

22. Thus, let us all come together to synergize our efforts and resources in expanding this industry by playing an active role to put Malaysia on the birdwatchers’ map as another great destination for birdwatching.

23. Thank you.

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