

**REMARKS BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF IDFR
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE DiD 1/2023
8 MAY 2023 | TREATY ROOM, IDFR**

- I always say: Fresh faces, eager faces, bubbly energy around the room. You have come to IDFR. At long last. This, to you, is the beginning of your diplomatic journey. One that will take you to greater and greater heights in the next thirty years or so.
- IDFR is also very happy to have you. For the next four months, we own you – body and soul. It's great to have fresh blood again.
- Most of you have spent a stint in Wisma Putra. Say goodbye to the Desk – it is very rare that you go back to the same desk after four months away. It's a good thing: learn something new, reinvent ourselves. This is going to be the rest of your life – reinventing yourselves.
- Here at IDFR we aim to polish you, to bring out your inner beauty, to teach you how to cover your flaws, and to make you shine. It is never too late to learn, unlearn and relearn.
- No matter how good you are, no matter how great you think you are, there is always infinite room to be better. I don't want you to be moderate. I don't want you to be good. I want you to be the best. The best that YOU can be.
- You should be proud that you have now joined a part of history, and it is a great history. Malaysia's story was made not from the achievements of its domestic sector, but by the accomplishments of the external sector. We built our name because we were strong internationally, not because we were strong domestically.

- Those of you who have come thinking that this is going to be your honeymoon period, think again. The training is compact because it has to be. A diplomat is everything to everyone. All the knowledge must be at your fingertips.
- It will be a challenge – managing life and the demands of this course. But once you pass that hurdle and figure out how to work effectively, then I can assure you, the rest of it, the rest of life, is going to be a breeze. [multitasking example]
- I know that many of you would have asked around, trying to get a feel of what the DiD is like. I would suggest that you forget what you were told. Puan Adni and I, and the CEC team, really worked hard to create new things, more challenges, so that we could bring out the better version of yourself.
- What has not changed:
 - Morning prayers: subject matter experts
 - English language skills
 - Networking skills
 - The main diplomatic skills
- What has changed?
 - The level of subject matter expertise you are expected to have;
 - The level of English language expertise you are expected to have
 - The expectation of brilliant networking skills
 - More interaction with your surroundings, advanced diplomatic skills sets.
- This year, we have introduced an ‘intelligence’ module in your programme. You have heard of emotional intelligence? No longer enough for diplomats in today’s world to be intelligent, and have emotional intelligence. So we will be introducing you to cultural intelligence, and spiritual intelligence. Don’t worry, nothing to do with

the Morning Prayers, and everything to do with grounding you in your own belief, and your own culture – the roots of our own being.

- If in your previous life in Wisma Putra, you managed to avoid the rounds of reception that so many of us have to endure, then be prepared: here at the DiD, you will have more exposure, more chances to shine, and of course, more opportunities to slip up.

- Three rules I expect you to abide by:
 - **One:** We greatly encourage you to think outside the box. Be creative, be innovative. You can ‘borrow’ ideas, refine it, and improve upon it. But you CANNOT plagiarise. I will not stand for those who copy and paste, or take whole paragraphs without attribution, and without analytical thought.

 - **Second:** punctuality is the cornerstone of our programmes here. Punctuality in attendance, punctuality in event management, punctuality in submission of work. Don’t wait until the last minute to complete your assignment. Believe me, something will come up to prevent you from completing.

Being punctual is about respect – respect to yourself, your colleagues, and of others who are here on time. Is their time less valuable than yours?

- **Third:** Humility and courteousness must be your mantra from here on end. Respect your trainers, your lecturers for the knowledge they give you, for the experience they bring you, and for the time they devote to you. Common sense, but has to be reminded. Be courteous to everyone around you – from the disadvantaged cleaner to the most advantaged of VIPs.

- One good habit that I would encourage you to pick up while you are with us, is the habit of keeping a journal. Buy a good old-fashioned notebook and start writing in it. Why go 20th century? Because 1) writing makes you practice your thoughts; 2) writing makes your practice your handwriting. I still have a journal, despite writing faster on a keyboard.

[Condolence book story]

- Going into this programme, I want you to always keep in mind that:
 - Malaysia is not a superpower. This means two things – we cannot on our own, change things; and we cannot remain on the periphery. What does this mean?
 - **Need friends – network**
 - **If we remain under the radar, people will forget us. For this we have introduced the Social Diplomat.**
 - **Second:** Substance is everything in tomorrow's world. If before this our diplomats can get away with knowing just a bit, this can no longer be the case. Already we are being overtaken by others. For this we have introduced the Diplomatic Arsenal and the Core Diplomatic Skills.
 - **Third:** Very few things are in the private domain these days. You are diplomats and civil servants – YOU are a public commodity. What you say, what you do, where you go, who you associate with – are all things that reflect on you. Practice discretion and understand the sanctity of privacy. We will have an opportunity to discuss this further in the Public Diplomacy section of the module.

- You have with you a sterling team of CEC coordinators. They know how much work there is to be done, and how much the Institute can challenge you, to coax that excellent diplomat out. As supervisors, as trainers, we can only bring a horse to water. We can't make it drink. Only the horse can do it. This is the origin of the saying "the workhorses of the Ministry".
- So, let's get to it.
- **With that, I officially declare the Diploma in Diplomacy Cohort 1/2023 open. Class is now in session.**