

**Opening Remarks by the Vice Chancellor of Universiti Malaya**  
**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CIVILISATIONAL DIALOGUE 2025**  
**(ICONCIDI'25)**  
**Commemorating 30 Years of Civilisational Dialogue at Universiti Malaya**

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**Bismillahirrahmanirrahim. Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh. Salam Sejahtera and a very good morning.**

Yang Amat Berhormat Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, distinguished guests, esteemed scholars, students, ladies and gentlemen:

1. It is my deepest honour and privilege to welcome all of you to the International Conference on Civilisational Dialogue 2025, or ICONCIDI'25, here at Universiti Malaya. Today, we are not only gathering to engage in critical and meaningful dialogue across cultures, faiths, and civilisations, but we are also here to commemorate an important milestone — 30 years of civilisational dialogue at Universiti Malaya.
2. Let me begin by extending our heartfelt congratulations to the Centre for Civilisational Dialogue for three decades of unwavering dedication to fostering understanding between civilisations. And let me express our deepest gratitude to Yang Amat Berhormat Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, not only for gracing this event with your presence, but for being a lifelong advocate of civilisational harmony, wisdom, and justice.
3. Thirty years ago, in this very institution, we began a journey that transcended academic boundaries — a journey to unite the wisdom of East and West, and to bridge traditions across time and space. That landmark initiative in 1995, bringing together Islamic and Confucian scholars, was more than just a seminar. It was a declaration that civilisations need not clash — they can converge, collaborate, and coexist.
4. That spirit is more urgent than ever today.
5. We gather at a time of unprecedented challenges. Around us, the world is fractured by divisions — political, economic, ideological. From the tragic war in Ukraine, to ongoing conflicts in Gaza, Sudan and elsewhere, we are witnessing

the devastating human cost of disunity and mistrust. More than 117 million people have been forcibly displaced worldwide. Lives shattered. Families uprooted. Generations lost to violence and uncertainty.

6. Meanwhile, the East–West divide has deepened. Great-power rivalry has returned, amplified by trade wars, geopolitical posturing, and the weaponisation of technology and ideology. The tariff war between the United States and China, for instance, has already affected hundreds of billions in global trade, destabilizing markets and disrupting supply chains that millions depend on for their livelihoods. The IMF warns that a divided world economy could cost the global GDP up to 5% — a staggering loss that humanity simply cannot afford.
7. But the greatest tragedy is not in economics or politics. It is in what we lose as humans — our capacity for empathy, our ability to listen, and our moral responsibility to work together for the common good.
8. Ladies and gentlemen,
9. This divide is happening when we can least afford it. Climate change is accelerating, with last year being the hottest in recorded history. The earth is sending distress signals — in the form of floods, wildfires, rising seas and deadly droughts. And yet, instead of acting as one, nations are retreating into silos. The global response to COVID-19 showed us both the potential for solidarity and the dangers of selfishness. Vaccines became symbols of hoarding rather than hope. Borders were shut. Trust was tested.
10. We are also facing unprecedented demographic shifts. The world's population has surpassed 8 billion. Africa will soon host more than a quarter of humanity. Asia remains the most populous region. With this demographic transformation comes both promise and peril. It could spark new innovation and cooperation — or fuel new tensions if we do not foster respect and understanding across cultures and identities.
11. At the heart of all these challenges — climate, conflict, poverty, health — lies a single truth: no nation, no civilisation, no people can face them alone. The only way forward is together.
12. And this is where civilisational dialogue becomes more than an academic pursuit. It becomes a moral imperative. It is a bridge that allows us to understand not just the “what” of our differences, but the “why.” It opens a space

where disagreement does not mean division, where diversity is not a threat, but a treasure.

13. We must champion a new age — an age of humanity. One founded on the pillars of compassion, wisdom, education, technology, and shared humanity.
14. Let us begin with compassion — the most powerful force for good that transcends religion, ethnicity, and nationality. Compassion is the ability to see the suffering of another not as “theirs,” but as ours.
15. Then, wisdom — the accumulated insights of our civilisations. The East offers spiritual depth, the West offers scientific progress. Together, they can create a balanced world of reason and conscience.
16. Third, education — the great equalizer and the most potent antidote to prejudice and ignorance. Let us educate not just for skills, but for the soul. For tolerance. For critical thought. For global citizenship.
17. Fourth, technology — which must be a force for inclusion, not division. A means to connect classrooms, communities and cultures. To share knowledge. To warn of disasters. To save lives.
18. And fifth, and most profoundly, shared humanity. We must reject the narrowness of “us versus them.” In truth, there is only us — one human family, one planet, one destiny.
19. In this spirit, allow me to highlight the profound contributions of Prime Minister Dato’ Seri Anwar Ibrahim, whose concept of Malaysia Madani embodies precisely this philosophy.
20. Madani is not just a national ideal. It is a universal message — rooted in Compassion, Respect, Trust, Innovation, Prosperity and Sustainability. These are values the world desperately needs. Values that resonate across all faiths and philosophies. In his address to the United Nations, our Prime Minister called upon the world to unite cultures and civilisations for peace and progress, to reject supremacy in any form, and to build bridges of understanding rather than walls of fear.
21. His call to promote inter-cultural, inter-civilisational and inter-religious understanding is not a slogan — it is a roadmap for the future. And Malaysia, through the Madani spirit, is showing how a plural society can embrace its diversity, protect its dignity, and prosper with justice.

22. Universiti Malaya, through our Centre for Civilisational Dialogue, is proud to be part of this national and global effort. For 30 years, we have held space for dialogue, built networks across faiths and philosophies, and trained generations of scholars in the art of listening and learning. Today, we rededicate ourselves to that mission.
23. To our young people in this hall, I say: the future is yours. Build it with wisdom and empathy. Be brave enough to reach across boundaries. Use your voices to heal divisions. The next 30 years must be your legacy of unity, not our legacy of conflict.
24. We have seen what disunity brings. Two world wars claimed more than 100 million lives. The atomic age reminded us how close we have come to destroying everything. We cannot go back. The stakes are too high.
25. Let us instead choose a future of peace. A future where the child in Gaza, the student in Tokyo, the teacher in Nairobi, and the refugee in Europe all see themselves in one another.
26. Let us declare today that East and West are not rivals, but partners. That civilisational strength comes from dialogue, not domination. That the best of humanity is still ahead of us — if we choose it.
27. Ladies and gentlemen,
28. In commemorating 30 years of civilisational dialogue, we are not just looking back. We are charting the course ahead.
29. Let Universiti Malaya remain a beacon of thought and conscience. Let Malaysia lead with moral clarity. Let each of us be ambassadors of dialogue and peace.

Together, let us affirm that a better world is not only possible — it is necessary. And it begins with us.

Thank you.

*Terima kasih.*

*Wabillahi tawfik walhidayah, wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.*