

## Welcoming Speech by the Vice-Chancellor

### UNIVERSITI MALAYA AND FROZEN HORIZONS : 25 YEARS OF ANTARCTIC EXPLORATION, TROPICAL LINKAGES AND CLIMATE ACTION

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Distinguished guests, esteemed colleagues, dear students, ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is with great pleasure and profound honour that I welcome you all to this very special occasion – *UNIVERSITI MALAYA AND FROZEN HORIZONS: 25 Years of Antarctic Exploration, Tropical Linkages and Climate Action*. Today, we celebrate not only a remarkable milestone in scientific discovery and collaboration, but also a renewed call to action in addressing the defining challenge of our time – climate change.
2. As we gather here, we are reminded that the frozen horizons of Antarctica are not distant and detached from our tropical homeland. What happens at the poles reverberates across the globe, influencing weather, sea levels, ecosystems, and the very stability of human life. The Antarctic is a mirror that reflects both the fragility of our planet and the urgency of our collective duty.

3. Climate action is not an option; it is a necessity. It is critical for our survival, prosperity, and the inheritance we leave to future generations. Universiti Malaya, as Malaysia's oldest and premier university, embraces this responsibility wholeheartedly. Through research, education, partnerships, and on-the-ground interventions, UM is committed to being part of the solution – advancing knowledge and driving transformative action in response to the climate crisis.
4. For a quarter of a century, UM has been at the forefront of Antarctic research, linking the frozen continent with tropical ecosystems in Southeast Asia. Our scientists, explorers, and students have contributed to a deeper understanding of how changes in one part of the world affect others – from melting ice sheets to coral reef health, from shifting biodiversity to human livelihoods.
5. As Malaysia's premier university, UM is uniquely placed to speak for the Global South in climate science. Our perspective from the tropics, combined with decades of Antarctic research, allows us to connect global phenomena with local realities. In doing so, we strengthen Malaysia's role as a contributor to global solutions, and as a bridge between developed and developing worlds in climate action.

6. This work is not done in isolation. It is part of a global network of shared responsibility and scientific cooperation, where UM stands proudly as a flagbearer of Malaysia's role in the global climate conversation.
7. On a personal note, I have seen with my own eyes how climate change leaves its scars. During my dives into Malaysia's waters, I witnessed the heartbreak of coral bleaching – vibrant marine ecosystems turning pale and lifeless under the stress of warming seas. Yet, I also saw hope. Where interventions were made, where awareness was raised and action sustained, corals showed signs of recovery, colour, and life.
8. This experience serves as a powerful reminder: nature is resilient, but only if we give it a chance. It underscores the importance of perseverance, continuous efforts, and the awareness that every action – no matter how small – contributes to the healing of our planet.
9. Our fight against climate change is not just about protecting the environment – it is about securing our food systems, our economies, and our national resilience. As Malaysia leads ASEAN in 2025, UM will continue to serve as a trusted knowledge partner in shaping policies, training future leaders, and providing solutions that safeguard both our environment and our prosperity.

10. As we mark 25 years of Antarctic exploration, let us remember that this is not just a celebration of past achievements. It is a call to recommit ourselves to the future. UM will continue to lead with conviction, to nurture partnerships, and to inspire our young people to be climate champions.
11. Together, let us ensure that the frozen horizons and tropical seas remain living classrooms for generations to come – symbols of resilience, cooperation, and hope.
12. Ladies and gentlemen, once again, welcome to this event. May it serve not only as a celebration of our journey but also as a launchpad for greater action, collaboration, and commitment in safeguarding our planet.

Thank you.