

**Welcoming Speech
EU-EAGA BizTech Partnership**

Mr. Bernardino Moningka Vega, Jr.
Chairman, BIMP-EAGA Business Council (BEBC)

17 November 2009
Imperial Hotel, Miri, Sarawak

Salam Sejahtera and Good Evening to:

Y.Bhg. Lawrence Lai Yew Son, *Mayor of Miri City Council*

His Excellency Vincent Piket, *Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Commission to Malaysia*

Y.Bhg. Dato' Leong Kin Mun, *Technical Advisor of EU-EAGA BizTech Partnership*

Fellow BEBC Country Directors and Members,

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, on behalf of the project partners, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our honourable guests, **Y.Bhg. Lawrence Lai Yew Son**, *Mayor of Miri City Council* who deputise **YB Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Dr. George Chan Hong Nam**, *Deputy Chief Minister & Minister of Industrial Development & Minister of Modernisation of Agriculture Sarawak, Malaysia* and **H.E. Vincent Piket**, *Ambassador & Head of Delegation of the European Commission* for their kind presence in today's Opening Ceremony. Please also allow me to take this opportunity to express my warm welcome to all local and foreign delegates for participating at the European Union-East ASEAN Growth Area Business and Technology Partnership (EU-EAGA BizTech Partnership). Selamat Datang to Miri!

The BIMP-EAGA Business Council is pleased to complement the Sarawak State Government's effort in promoting economic growth in the State as well as in the EAGA region. We are also honoured to collaborate with the European Commission's Asia Invest Programme, ConnectAsiaEurope e.V., Germany; Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX), Spain; Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Foundation, Inc. (CCPF) and The French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Vietnam (CCIFV) for making this initiative a success.

This event comprises of several components which includes; a Business Match-Making Event, International Conference, Capacity Building Programme, Business Partnering Seminar and Business Culture Training, which has been designed to create a strategic platform for facilitating collaboration between participating organisations from the European Union (EU) and Asia particularly in the BIMP-EAGA region. The aspects of business discussed will include trade & investment, joint venturing, management contract, technical assistance, technology licensing, consultancy, trading, venture capital investment and R&D in the four sectors of Agriculture/Aquaculture, Natural Resources (Forestry), Ecotourism and Environment & Energy. By forging a smart partnership as such, this will not only help in spurring economic growth in the region, but also

promoting a paradigm shift to an innovation-based economy thru leveraging expertise from the European counterparts.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Formally launched in year 1994, BIMP-EAGA is a cooperation initiative involving bordering regions in four ASEAN countries; Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia (the islands of Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Papua, and Moluccas, Malaysia (the state of Sabah and Sarawak) and the Philippines (islands of Mindanao and Palawan). The cooperation aims to accelerate economic development by increasing trade, investment and tourism from within and outside the subregion.

We are fortunate that this region is blessed with a wealth of natural resources such as minerals and forestry in Kalimantan, Sabah and Sarawak, oil and gas in Brunei and East Kalimantan, as well as marine resources and agricultural products in Mindanao, Palawan and North Sulawesi. Natural resources not only play a vital role in generating income to the region, but it also creates jobs and employment opportunities for the people. In addition, it also offers a lot of potentials for new businesses to develop such as carbon trading, ecotourism and other business models with strong sustainable development components. It is therefore natural that we should optimise the utilisation of resources to generate a business framework that will establish more “green” and “cleaner” businesses for economic growth in the region and beyond.

As a region which is rich in natural resources, we recognise the potential in pursuing sustainable development in these sectors. To harness the potential, we should explore innovative ways to enhance the competitiveness through increase investment in infrastructure development, technology collaboration, and greater market access opportunities. Government must see itself not only as a facilitator to provide the necessary policy structure and framework, but it also must strengthen existing institutions to enable them to address the issues and concern of the 21st Century. By doing this, it will ensure a vibrant private sector which can then play a more effective role as engines

of growth in their respective countries and in the region. Hence, the EU-EAGA BizTech Partnership is an opportune platform to boost the economic co-operation between the EU and Asia specifically at the BIMP-EAGA region.

Allow me to take this opportunity to also convey my sincere appreciation to the European Commission – Asia Invest II Programme for co-funding this initiative as well as all the EU partners, supportive organisations, official media partners and airlines, speakers, participants and working committees who have contributed to the success of this event. Finally, I hope this auspicious event will achieve its objective by facilitating business and technology collaboration and I wish all the participants to have a fruitful business meeting. For foreign delegates, please also take this opportunity to discover the beauty of Borneo.

Thank you

Maraming Salamat

Terima Kasih