

# Conference on Investment and Business Opportunities : Malaysia–Gabon

*- ENGLISH VERSION ONLY -*

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MINISTER  
MINISTRY OF PLANTATION INDUSTRIES AND COMMODITIES OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE  
CONFERENCE ON INVESTMENT AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES: MALAYSIA-GABON,  
FRIDAY, 4 MARCH 2011  
ROYALE CHULAN HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR

The Honourable Mr. Magnagna Christian  
Minister of Water and Forests,  
Republic of Gabon

Mr. Koumba Nzaou  
Director General of Water and Forests,  
Republic of Gabon

Y. Bhg. Dato' Wilfred Madius Tangau  
Chairman  
Malaysian Timber Industry Board

Dr. Jalaluddin Harun  
Director-General  
Malaysian Timber Industry Board

Distinguished Delegates from Gabon, Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum w.b.t, a Very Good Morning and Salam 1 Malaysia,

I would like to extend a warm welcome to the Honourable Mr. Magnagna Christian, Minister of Water and Forests, Republic of Gabon and his entourage to Malaysia in conjunction with the Conference on Investment and Business Opportunities: Malaysia – Gabon. I also take this opportunity to welcome participants from Gabon wish all of you “Selamat Datang”. It is my fervent hope that this visit and the organisation of the Conference could further strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries.

2. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Malaysian Timber Industry Board (MTIB) for the invitation to officiate this Conference. In this context, I would like to congratulate MTIB for its continued efforts in further developing the Malaysian timber sector and am grateful to see the participation of industry members in this Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen

3. I was informed that one of the key objectives of this Conference is to update the private sector in Malaysia on the opportunities available in Gabon, in particular in the Special Economic Zone (SEZ). Notwithstanding this, the Conference will also cover other areas such as opportunities in the construction, training, education and research and development (R&D) activities. In this context, it is my sincere hope that the timber industry in Malaysia would certainly benefit from the hosting of this Conference.

4. There are plenty of opportunities between Malaysia and Gabon to develop synergy in the timber sector. Among the potential cooperation areas that could be explored include the supply of raw materials for downstream processing in Malaysia and capacity building for the timber sector in Gabon. In terms of raw materials, both countries are endowed with tropical forests which offer a steady supply of raw materials. In this regard, while Gabon has long been noted as an important source of raw

material for the developed markets in Europe, with its internationally famous Okume timber, Malaysia is also a well-known supplier of Meranti sawntimber. Hence, the organisation of today's seminar is indeed timely as it offers vast opportunities for the timber fraternity to undertake joint efforts, including synergizing the strength in both countries in terms of comparative advantages.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. While Malaysia and Gabon share some similarities, the timber industry in both countries differs in terms of the level of development. While Gabon is a dominant supplier of primary processed timber, Malaysia has to some extent established itself as one of the leading suppliers of downstream processed timber products.

6. During the last four decades, through industrialisation efforts, the Malaysian timber industry has been transformed from a mere producer of sawn timber and boards for domestic and export markets in the 1970s to become a major exporter of high value value-added timber products such as furniture, mouldings, and builders' carpentry and joinery . The pursuit towards higher value-added manufacturing activities has been driven primarily through the promotion and commercialisation of new and improved technology as well as greater emphasis on R&D efforts. This was complimented further through sustained efforts in developing new markets and strengthening existing markets. In addition, the private sector in Malaysia through their own initiatives has undertaken R&D activities to further enhance product offerings.

7. The Malaysian Government strongly supports the continuous development and progress of the timber industry as it sees the untapped potential the industry may contribute to the national economy. In this regard, the Government has launched the National Timber Industry Policy (NATIP) in 2009 to provide a direction for the timber industry in Malaysia up to the year 2020, to remain sustainable and competitive amidst a challenging global environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

8. The Special Economic Zone (SEZ) which Gabon is promoting offers a window of opportunity for the Malaysian timber industry. Perhaps Gabon, with its still vast untapped forest resources, could be an important source of timber raw materials for Malaysia. To complement this, Malaysia with its relatively advanced timber industry could be an important investor in Gabon. In this context, it is worth noting that a number of Malaysian timber companies have already established themselves in countries such as Papua New Guinea, Australia, China and even in far away markets like Russia and Guyana.

9. Such cross border business ventures are not only full of risks but also require a lot of determination on the part of the investors. However, I am sure the benefits that could be reaped by such an investment are immense and could extend well beyond the risks. Thus, I believe that the Malaysian investors could succeed in Gabon as they have already succeeded in other countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. Lastly, let me again express my heartfelt appreciation to the Honourable Mr. Magnagna Christian, the Minister of Water and Forests and the delegation from Gabon who are here in conjunction with the Conference. I hope that while all of you are here, you can take some time off to visit places of interests in the country. Malaysia has plenty of interesting places to visit including the iconic Twin Towers.

11. In conclusion, I would like to once again thank MTIB for the invitation to officiate the Conference on Investment and Business Opportunities: Malaysia – Gabon.

On that note, it gives me great pleasure to declare open the Conference.

Thank you.

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