

Signing Ceremony of MOU for Cooperation in the Promotion of Rubberwood

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DEPUTY MINISTER OF PLANTATION INDUSTRIES AND COMMODITIES, MALAYSIA

AT THE SIGNING CEREMONY OF MOU FOR COOPERATION IN THE PROMOTION OF RUBBERWOOD

20 OCTOBER 2010 (WEDNESDAY), KUALA LUMPUR

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Saudara Pengerusi Majlis

Y.Bhg. Datin Paduka Nurmala Abd Rahim

Timbalan Ketua Setiausaha I

Kementerian Perusahaan Perladangan dan Komoditi

Y. Bhg. Dato' Madius Tangau

Pengerusi, Lembaga Perindustrian Kayu Malaysia (MTIB)

Y.M. Tunku Tan Sri Dato' Osman Ahmad

Pengerusi, Majlis Kayu Kayan Malaysia

(Malaysian Timber Council – MTC)

Y.Brs. Dr. Jalaluddin Harun

Ketua Pengarah, MTIB

Y.Brs. Encik Cheah Kam Huan

Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif, MTC

Y.Brs. Encik Au Leck Chai

Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif, Majlis Promosi Perabot Malaysia (MFPC)

Dif-dif Kehormat, Tuan-Tuan dan Puan-Puan sekalian,

Selamat Pagi, Salam Sejahtera dan Salam 1 Malaysia,

Bersyukur kita ke hadrat Allah s.w.t. kerana dengan limpah kurnia dan keizininannya dapat kita bersama-sama hadir di Majlis Menandatangani Memorandum Persefahaman (MoU) di antara MTIB, MTC dan MFPC dengan the Thai Parawood Association dan the Wood Processing Industry Club of the Federation of Thai Industries pada hari ini. Saya mengucapkan terima kasih kepada Lembaga Perindustrian Kayu Malaysia (MTIB), MTC dan MFPC kerana sudi menjemput saya untuk hadir ke Majlis ini.

2. In this regards, let me extend a warm welcome to our friends from Thailand, Mr. Sutin Pornchaisuree, President of the Thai Parawood Association, Mr. Veera Chencharoenvong, Chairman of the Wood Processing Industry Club of the Federation of Thai Industries and their colleagues to this ceremony and to our beautiful country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. This morning, we are gathered to mark another milestone in the economic relationship between Malaysia and Thailand. Being a close neighbour, trade between Malaysia and Thailand has been strengthened over the years, including the timber trade which has been significant. In 2009, the total trade between Malaysia and Thailand amounted to RM56.2 billion, with Malaysia recording an export of RM29.8 billion compared with an import of RM26.3 billion with Thailand. Amongst the diverse goods traded, timber and timber products represented an important component, with exports totaling no less than half-a-billion Ringgit. The timber exports to Thailand amounted at RM522.8 million with the main products exported are sawntimber, plywood, furniture and particleboard.

4. Malaysia has also imported substantial amount of timber products from Thailand. The timber imports into Malaysia from Thailand amounted to RM466 million in 2009 with particleboard, sawntimber and rubberwood being the major imported items. Although Malaysia has its own rubberwood supply, imports of rubberwood from Thailand has been growing steadily since the Malaysian furniture industry began to flourish in the early 1980s.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. Malaysia owes much of its success of its furniture industry to the availability of the rubberwood. The characteristics and technical properties of rubberwood had made it an ideal wood for making furniture. Classified as medium hardwood, rubberwood is versatile and easy to work on. The wood can be easily planed, finished and stained with various colours as required by the consumers due to the natural whitishness of the wood. Aided by its readied abundance and relatively lower price, it is therefore not surprising that the rubberwood has become the favourite choice for the Malaysian furniture manufacturing industry. Malaysian rubberwood furniture is now being marketed and accepted in all parts of the world. Malaysia is currently amongst the top ten global suppliers and exporter of furniture and the Malaysian furniture had gained recognition especially in the United States, Japan, EU and China.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. Despite the wide acceptance of rubberwood furniture in the international market, the wood is still perceived by many as a low-valued wood. Traditionally, rubberwood is only harvested as a result of replanting activities by rubber trees growers. In the past, these rubberwood were felled and then sold as fuel wood during replanting. The wood is therefore cheap as there were no other high-value commercial uses. However, through intensive research and development in the treatment and preservation to enhance the strength and quality of the wood, rubberwood can now be used in numerous high-value applications such as joinery and carpentry items, panels and furniture manufacturing.

7. Following the increased acceptance of the rubberwood in the international market and the subsequent enhancement in the quality of the wood, the furniture industry recognized the need for a re-branding of the wood, so that the value of rubberwood could commensurate with the quality and value of the wood as a natural resource. Amongst these efforts, the most notable would be the effort to re-brand the Malaysian rubberwood as Malaysian Oak. Presently, taking the cue from the development in the international market, there are also efforts to brand the rubberwood as 'Green' or 'environment-friendly' since the wood is harvested from estates and small holdings. It is replanted on a 20 to 25 years cycle.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

8. We take recognition that environment and the green issue will take centre stage in the global market. There are concerns that the increasing world population, which totaled at 6.5 billion, is currently consuming resources at a rate far in excess of nature's capacity to replenish them. The current agenda such as climate change and global warming will have huge impacts on business and industry.

9. Taking the cue from such development, Malaysia has been actively promoting the sustainability of its resources and products. Malaysia's forests are managed sustainably and sustainable forest management (SFM) is strictly enforced. The Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS) is gaining recognition and in 2009 was recognized by Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) as one of its recognized certification scheme for sustainability.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. Malaysia will continue to intensify its efforts in the sustainable management and production of its resources. In terms of marketing, we also believe that although currently there may be few consumers who will pay more for green products, there are also growing numbers of conscience consumers who will give their dollar to the product which is ethically sourced or has a better environmental profile.

11. I believe that most producers including the timber producers are sensitive to these developments and have taken steps to respond to this growing demand. In this respect, I understand that the rubberwood producers in Thailand have been making similar efforts in this direction.

12. Perhaps it is in this area that we can cooperate to share our experience and ideas in promoting and marketing of rubberwood and its products. Without doubt, Malaysia and Thailand share many similarities in trade, products and even in economic development. In this respect, I lauded the efforts by these agencies and associations present today, namely the Malaysian Timber Industry Board, Malaysian Timber Council, Malaysian Furniture Promotion Council, the Thai Parawood Association and the Wood Processing Industry Club of the Federation of Thailand Industries, that have the foresight to seize the opportunities and benefits of working together for the benefit of their respective industries.

13. Looking ahead, I also anticipate such cooperation would bring benefits not only to the respective countries but also beyond their borders for instance in the ASEAN market. In addition, markets in countries that ASEAN has signed the Free Trade Agreement such as Japan, Korea, India, New Zealand/Australia and China could also be explored.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

16. Therefore, it is my sincere wish that the signing of the MOU today will pave the way for further cooperation and collaboration in other areas. I am hoping that Rubberwood is only the start.

17. In closing, I would like to once again thank the organizers for inviting me this morning and I wish to extend my best wishes to all the Parties here and hope to see more cooperation between the timber industries between the two countries is promoted.

Thank you.

Disediakan oleh : Safiah Aimi Md. Isa
PSU (KTK)

Zaida Zakaria
PSU (KTK)

Disemak oleh : Hasliana Kamarudin
KPSU (KTK) II

Diluluskan oleh : Datin Paduka Nurmala Abd. Rahim
TKSU I