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INTRODUCTION

1. Good morning! I would like to begin by expressing my appreciation to the organisers of the 43rd Convention of the World Chinese Language Press Institute. Thank you for inviting me to address and officiate this convention.

2. I understand that this is the fifth time the Convention of the World Chinese Language Press Institute has been held in Malaysia. On behalf of the government and people of Malaysia, I would like to welcome you back and extend a warm welcome to the delegates and participants from all around the world.

3. I hope that you will be able to establish close friendships and ties while you are here - just as many of your predecessors did in previous years. Malaysians from all backgrounds are known for strong friendships and warm hospitality, which are key ingredients of our harmonious, yet dynamic, multi-cultural society.

Roles of the Media

4. Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, ever since the invention of paper-making in China thousands of years ago and the printing press in Europe hundreds of years ago, news reporting has played an important role in our societies. It has not only kept us informed – more importantly, it has also helped us understand the world and events that impact our lives.

5. As sentient and inquisitive beings, it is only natural that we are on a constant quest for truth and deeper understanding. We are intrigued by news and opinion pieces that provide a broad range of perspectives. They shape how we see our leaders, our communities and ourselves. This is the fundamental and immutable role of the media – to investigate, reveal lessons learned, and above all, uncover the truth.

6. In modern times, the media has assumed a proactive role in society – as investigators, opinion shapers, and educators. Indeed, from Amherst in America to Malacca in Malaysia, the news media engages in fact-finding and story-telling which helps shape public discourse. These stories, in turn, affect our lives not only socially and politically, but also economically.

7. The Chinese media, in particular, has enormous reach and influence both in China and in the many Chinese-language communities around the world. This includes – I am proud to say – in Malaysia where we have a strong and vibrant Malaysian Chinese community. This means that Chinese writers can potentially

influence nearly one-fifth of the total population on Earth. This is truly staggering. I salute your efforts to meet the challenges of this important - and enormous - task.

8. Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, we are finishing the first decade of the new century. As we look ahead, we see new and unprecedented challenges. The international economy, while trying many strategies to support a recovery, nonetheless still wobbles along a shaky path. There are many potholes and risks along the way.

9. Similarly, the print media is facing historic pressures and competition from online communications, which is quicker to release their stories, cheaper to run, and broader in access. There are mounting pressures for traditional media to find ways to be *relevant*, or more *readable* for increasingly sophisticated readers and impatient young audiences. Yet despite these pressures, the media – in all languages and formats – must maintain its credibility, and integrity and mission.

10. To that end, and in light of these challenges, I would like to propose three roles for the media community, and I call on the Chinese media to engage in such manners. These are:

11. Number one: Media as promoter of good values especially moderation; number two: media as a watch tower for change; and number three: media as catalyst for development. Allow me to elaborate on each of these roles.

Media as Promoter of Moderation

12. Let me first address how the media can support the importance of moderation. During my speech at the United Nations General Assembly in September this year, I emphasised that it is time for the moderates in all countries - of all religions and cultures - to take back the centre and reclaim the agenda for peace and pragmatism. This movement, and I called this movement global movement of the moderations can marginalise the extremists. I have repeatedly said that the divide and the problem are not between various religions, the real problem lies between the moderates and the extremists. In this regard, the media has a significant role to play in this quest. With collective determination, we can build a more rational, secure and equitable world. As media messages about the majority who love peace and moderation spread around the globe, this new world is indeed within our reach.

Media as Watch Tower for Change

13. Second, I believe that media should function as a watch tower for change. In this regard, the media needs to take an aggressive role, not so much as a watch *dog* – since people can ignore a dog barking – but as a watch tower for change. Keeping watch in this steady and resolute manner, the media can hold governments, companies, communities, and individuals to account.

14. My clarion call in is 1Malaysia. It calls for national harmony and mutual respect – in which diversity is seen not as a problem but instead as a source of our strength. Instead of passively tolerating differences, we need to celebrate diversity. I believe it is the right formula for national harmony and can contribute to international

peace. Therefore, the next logical extension of this 1Malaysia would be 1Region and, ultimately, 1World. Global media organizations should hold us accountable to work towards this goal, as they should hold all governments accountable in providing better lives for their people.

Media as Catalyst for Development

Ladies and gentlemen,

15. My third idea is to suggest that the media could act as a catalyst for development, especially within the context of what we want to attain and what we aspire towards. In Malaysia, for example, we have been taking proactive steps to achieve our aspiration to become a high-income nation by the year 2020. To support this objective, we have introduced programmes to accelerate economic growth through a New Economic Model and the Economic Transformation Programme. In this regard, I would like to mention that it is not just a plan, it is actually a roadmap. We have already showed in place certain different progress and projects, 18 different ETP projects are actually on the ground and there will be many many more in the near future.

16. I cannot stress enough how important the efforts of the Malaysian Chinese community have been to economic and social progress in Malaysia. The nation would not be what it is today without the industry, expertise and dedication of the Malaysian Chinese community. And this is something which is important for us not only to recognise but also for us to look at each other so that connectively together we can build a much stronger, better Malaysia, a truly prosperous 21st century nation. And for us to achieve this aim, we cannot act alone. We, all Malaysian communities, all Malaysian ethnic groups must work together, and together under the umbrella of 1Malaysia we can achieve our national aspirations and goals.

17. As for the media's role, news stories must clearly and accurately communicate the importance of economic and social programmes to improve citizens' lives. They need to explain how individuals and families will be effected, why they are being implemented, and how society as a whole can benefit from them. Difficult economic concepts will need to be defined in everyday language, and explanations shared - how short-term changes can lead to long-term benefits. In these ways, the media can truly serves as a catalyst for development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

18. It is so important for us to really nurture this one great country of our own. We have so many good things, we should not do things that can only divide this nation; if we divide this nation we all will be losers. I don't think that should be our intention. We should gear upon our strength, despite our differences we have many many things that we share together and that can bind us together. And if we follow that path, Malaysia will be truly a prosperous and harmonious 21st century nation.

Kwong Wah Yit Poh Centennial Celebration

Ladies and gentlemen,

19. I would like to close by saying how delighted I was to learn that Kwong Wah Yit Poh is celebrating its centennial birthday today. Founded by Dr. Sun Yat Sen, Kwong Wah has had a colourful history and witnessed profound changes over the past hundred years. I would like to congratulate Kwong Wah for a job well done. As a Chinese proverb goes "although you have achieved much, you should continue to strive for excellence". I hope Kwong Wah will continue its good work for at least another hundred years.

20. Once again, thank you for inviting me to this important event. I wish all the delegates a most successful event. Thank you.



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