

Opening Ceremony: PCF8

28 November 2016

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

YBHG Professor Dato' Dr Mansor Fadzil
President/Vice-Chancellor, Open University of Malaysia



Bismillahir rahmanir rahim.

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and Good Morning.

Yang Berhormat Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh

Minister of Higher Education Malaysia

Honourable Ministers of Education from Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, Seychelles and Swaziland

Excellencies

Professor Dr Asha Kanwar

President and CEO, Commonwealth of Learning (COL)

Esteemed Keynote Speakers

Delegates and Participants

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me begin by offering a warm welcome to all delegates and participants to the Opening Ceremony of the 8th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF8).

We are delighted to host you in Kuala Lumpur for this special event. As open and distance learning (ODL) practitioners, stakeholders, research communities, academics and ordinary citizens from all across the globe, your presence here today represents the diversity that is central to the spirit of the Commonwealth. Thank you for taking part in PCF8.

I am pleased to share that we have with us a very special guest of honour this morning. He has taken time off his busy schedule as Malaysia's Minister of Higher Education to officiate the launch of PCF8.

Yang Berhormat Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh, allow me to represent my fellow colleagues from Open University Malaysia (OUM), the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and all our speakers, guests and delegates, in thanking you for gracing this Opening Ceremony. We are most honoured that you have joined us to officially open this prestigious event.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The success of PCF8 in the next several days will depend not only on the various efforts by COL and OUM as the Forum co-hosts, but also on the active participation by all delegates.

Similar to previous editions of the Forum, PCF8 will include a very comprehensive four-day schedule that will include, among others, the Asa Briggs Lecture; one Plenary Session; four Keynote Addresses; several pre-conference workshops and online forums; ten Parallel Sessions; three Country Showcases; as well as the Market Exchange. I hope that this programme will provide enlightening opportunities for discussion, sharing and exchange amongst all delegates and participants.

Open, online and flexible learning is undeniably an essential element in higher education. Over the last several decades we have witnessed how this approach, through the efforts of open universities globally, has widened access to learning opportunities to a great number of people, regardless of creed, age, background or location. I believe it is with the same spirit that ODL has also made its mark in the broader sphere of lifelong learning. Today, with the various technologies and flexible teaching and learning arrangements, ODL makes it possible for virtually anyone to partake in any form of learning, whether formal academic education, non-formal or informal courses and programmes; and as the means for any personal or professional end.

With a theme of “Open, Online and Flexible Learning: The Key to Sustainable Development”, PCF8 hopes to explore the various facets of the ODL approach in encouraging sustainability across all human initiatives. It is both exciting and humbling that such an extraordinary group of experts have convened here to deliberate on the salient themes that will be discussed throughout this Forum. I hope that PCF8 can provide a valuable platform to bring to fruition our aspirations regarding sustainable development through educational enterprises. This in turn can hopefully lead to far-reaching benefits for everyone in the entire Commonwealth community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

OUM is proud to co-host COL in the organising of PCF8. As an institution with a longstanding relationship with COL, over the years we have strived to support COL’s various initiatives in many ways. In co-hosting PCF8, we hope to demonstrate our continuous support of COL and its noble agenda. We also hope that it will further cement our collective commitment to the global ODL cause.

As the first ODL institution in Malaysia, OUM has been privileged with numerous opportunities to share our experiences and collaborate with other open universities around the world. We have also dedicated our energy to the organising of various national and international conferences over the past decade. PCF8 is perhaps the pinnacle of our efforts as host to such conferences and we hope to represent our nation in the best way possible.

As a representative of the Organising Committees, I would like to assure all delegates and participants that we will do our level best to ensure the smooth running of the programme over these four days. In turn, I look forward to everyone’s active participation throughout the activities that have been planned.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you once again for the support you have shown OUM, COL and PCF8. Welcome to Kuala Lumpur and I wish everyone fruitful deliberations and a pleasant stay in Malaysia.

Have a good day. *Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.*