

## Let's Protect Our Aquatic Life

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning and a Very Good day to you. I am Joliana Yee from Malaysia.

First and foremost, I would like to thank the organizers for making this trip possible for me to share some thought on the environment. I am here to tell you about the aquatic life in my country – what aquatic life is why is it so valuable, what is causing danger to it and what have been done in Malaysia to protect and conserve it.

In my country, Malaysia, which is situated in the western part of South East Asia, we are well known for our many beautiful islands that are surrounded by breath taking views. Especially the views under water!

Aquatic life are mainly plants and animals of the sea, from the high-tidemark along the shore to the depths of the ocean. These beautiful creatures can be found in just about any ocean.

The ocean is made out of various species of fishes, marine flora, corals reef, and other invertebrates such as crabs, lobster and prawns from the family of crustacean as well as the echinoderms such as starfish, sea urchin and sea cucumbers.

Besides the ocean, the inland waters also a home to more than 250 species of freshwater fishes and many aquatic plants. Do you know that a survey has indicated that the Malaysian region has more species of aquatic plants compared to many other regions in the world? Imagine the amount of aquatic life that the oceans and rivers of Malaysia are homed to!

There are as well, very beautiful creatures that we can be proud of and make the aquatic life so interesting to humans especially to divers. Do you know that among these wonderful life forms that can be found in our ocean, is the reticulate leatherback turtle, reputed to be the largest turtle in the world? And Malaysian beaches are home to four out of eight species of sea turtles. The special features of the turtles are that they normally go back to the beaches where they are born to lay their eggs! This is why we try to conserve such beaches to enable them to come back and breeds. One of the five well-known nest sites for leatherback turtles is at Rantau Abang beaches in Trengganu. Here, a sanctuary is gazetted to encourage the population of the turtles and prevent them from extinction!

Coral reefs are among the earth's most biologically productive and diverse ecosystems. Reef occurs in relatively shallow, clear tropical waters between 30° North and 30° South of the Equator and it is very sensitive to changes in environmental conditions such as temperature, sunlight and clarity as well as salinity and oxygen. The corals are divided into soft and hard corals and very unique in its shapes, colours and sizes. Besides being the heaven to the divers, the coral reefs are the natural habitat and breeding ground for most of marine fishes and hence, need to be protected.

The aquatic life is also a huge source of nutrients and protein. Quite an amount of vitamins I take daily have a little aquatic life in it. It helps me when I'm sick which makes them of medicinal use as well. A species of sea cucumber or locally known as "Gamat" is very famous of its medicinal values and now is facing extinction if appropriate actions are not taken to protect it.

Well, here is a question. What is the most widely used as sources of energy for cars? Its petroleum of course! And what is it produced from? Now let me explain to you! An ocean is a massive and complex system, which produces a large amount of energy by recycling dead bodies of fishes and other organisms into petroleum. Hundred of years ago, dead marine organisms are buried beneath a layer of soil and later dug up as petroleum by human. So imagine if there were no aquatic life.... There will be no petroleum.

However, man-made activities have cause great damage to our aquatic life. These include oil spillage into seas, illegal disposal of rubbish and factory waste into rivers, excessive human greed for collectors items, land-reclamation and extremely efficient modern fishing technology. These may also benefit the people, but will harm the aquatic life. Oil spillage will destroy plankton, fishes and many other aquatic lives, such as turtles, coral reefs and other rare marine species. Once these are damaged, they cannot be immediately replaced. Another harmful activity that leads to the destruction of our aquatic life are collectors, whether for private or commercial reasons, exploiting our lakes, rivers and seas by collecting items such as the corals and turtle eggs. These items are important, but soon they will become extinct when collectors over do their activities excessively. Land-reclamation is a need for some country but its also destroys our corals life which is an attraction to divers.

Your Excellencies,

I hope that this presentation has created awareness in us on the importance of our aquatic life and why we should conserve and protect it, so that both of our descendants and us are able to enjoy the beauty that lies beneath the ocean. I would also like to take this opportunity to invite everybody to come over to my beautiful country and enjoy a breath taking scenery of what we have in Malaysia. Being a 14-year old Malaysian student, I do have my role in environmental protection. In-facts, everybody have their own role to play but whether we do it or not is another question to be asked!

But do remember... that the future of the aquatic life is in our hands! Commitments are needed to conserves this heritage for the future. Please give an appropriate consideration towards the environment matters in what ever we plan to do. We do indeed, have an obligation to future generations to keep life on this planet as diverse as possible and to let them share opportunities and experiences made available by the continued existence of these resources. I hope the message presented is well received.

Thank You! Arigato Gozaimas.