

The 16th General Assembly of the Regional Islamic Da'wah Council of Southeast Asia and the Pacific (RISEAP)

The President of the Islamic Council of Western Australia Dr. Rateb Jneid attended the 16th General Assembly of the Regional Islamic Da'wah Council of Southeast Asia and the Pacific (RISEAP) in Taipei city Taiwan on Sunday 13 December 2015 on behalf of Muslim Australia.

The meeting held for the first time in Taipei City Taiwan. The gathering was attended by more than 80 religious leaders and scholars from 23 countries and territories in the region. These included RISEAP President Abdul Taib Mahmud and Deputy President Ridzuan Wu.

Dr Jneid said it was a very successful General Assembly. Also he expressed deep thanks to the President and Government of Taiwan, and his tremendous historic speech.

The meeting was held with the aim as follow:

1. Sustained effort to develop places of worship that cater for growing Muslim population as well as population movement
2. Helping organizations strive towards greater financial self-reliance such as establishment of *Baitulmal* that facilitate the collection and distribution of zakat.
3. Extending halal certification and increasing the availability of halal food outlets and food production, thereby making it more convenient for Muslims.
4. Development and refinement in the content of Islamic education and *Da'wah* programs.
5. Fostering inter-communal relations, standing against the treat of Muslim extremism, and reinforcing the image of Islam as a religion of peace.
6. Leadership renewal for all Muslim organizations to ensure continuity of good leadership. The challenge is to provide opportunities for potential leaders to be exposed to experiences of existing good Muslim leaders.

President Ma Ying-jeou opening Ceremony of the 16th General Assembly

President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) said at the opening ceremony of the 16th General Assembly of the Regional Islamic Da'wah Council of Southeast Asia and the Pacific (RISEAP) in Taipei that Taiwan is friendly toward Muslims and he would welcome more Muslims to the nation.

More than 80 religious leaders, academics and experts attended this year's meeting, with representatives of 23 nations and 53 organizations in attendance. This was the first time Taiwan hosted a RISEAP general assembly in its 35-year history.

President Ma said that from a historical perspective, Islam is like an old friend, adding that Islam was introduced into China early in the 7th century via traders, and that admiral Zheng He (鄭和), commander of Ming Dynasty (1368 to 1644) naval expeditions, was a Muslim.

The relationship between the ethnic Chinese and Islamic world dates back more than 1,300 years," Ma said. Although Muslims are a minority group in Taiwan, the government is working tirelessly to

safeguard their rights. He also supported the preservation of the Taipei Grand Mosque as a historic site when he served as Taipei mayor.

According to Ma, migrant labourers from Indonesia and other countries have increased the number of Muslims in Taiwan from 50,000 to roughly 250,000 in recent years. "This group contributes to Taiwan's cultural diversity and offers a special opportunity for locals to better understand the Islamic faith".

Since taking office in May 2008, Ma has been meeting the ROC hajj delegation every year. In April this year, he met with Muslim World League Secretary-General Abdullah bin Abdul Mohsin Al-Turki during an MWL-sponsored symposium in Taipei. "In keeping with the ROC Constitution, the government will continue striving to ensure religious equality and fostering an accommodating environment for Muslims in Taiwan."

Citing the latest Global Muslim Travel Index compiled by MasterCard Inc. and Crescent Rating, Ma said Taiwan is rated the 10th-best destination for Muslim travellers outside the Organization of Islamic Cooperation member states, a strong vote of confidence in government efforts creating a Muslim-friendly environment.

Dr. Rateb Jneid
President-Islamic Council of Western Australia