



Permanent Mission of
Malaysia
to the United Nations

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STATEMENT BY

**MADAME MARGARET HO POH YEOK
HEAD OF THE MALAYSIAN DELEGATION**

ON

**AGENDA ITEM 3 (a) (i): IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND
ACTION IN CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN AND FURTHER ACTIONS AND
INITIATIVES: FINANCING FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF
WOMEN**

**OF THE FIFTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

NEW YORK, 28 FEBRUARY 2008

Mr. Chairperson,

1. I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you, the Bureau, as well as the Secretariat on the excellent arrangements made thus far in this Fifty-Second Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.
2. I would also like to express our appreciation to the expert speakers at the high-level round table and the panel discussions who have clearly framed our agenda during this session.
3. The Government of Malaysia is cognizant of our obligations as a signatory to the CEDAW and pledge to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. Malaysia is committed to realizing women's rights as human rights, and to achieve this goal, changes in our legal and institutional frameworks have been made to protect, preserve and safeguard the rights and improve the status of women in the country in all areas.
4. Malaysia recognizes that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play an important role in complementing the efforts of the Government for the benefit of women, and funding for NGOs is provided within our budget to implement activities and programmes for the advancement of women.
5. Malaysia is also appreciative of the assistance from the United Nations organisations. Since 2003, our Government has been collaborating with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in implementing gender equality programmes

and projects involving: a gender responsive budget; capacity building on gender mainstreaming; and an Action Plan entitled, "Towards Achieving 30% Participation of Women at Decision Making Levels in Malaysia".

Violence Against Women

6. I wish to express Malaysia's support to the Secretary-General's campaign to end violence against women which was recently launched on 25 February 2008. We are pleased to note that the Secretary General is committed to a stronger and more visible role of the United Nations in efforts to eliminate violence against women.

7. The Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women, amongst others, acknowledges one-stop crisis centres as a good practice in the provision of services to provide treatment for victims of violence as well as other support services. We are pleased to inform that currently, more than 100 centres have been set up throughout Malaysia in Government hospitals. These centres allow for the management of the victims of violence and sexual crimes through a cooperative, comprehensive, integrated, as well as multi-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration.

8. Eliminating violence against women is a priority for the Government of Malaysia, and we take a zero tolerance policy towards it. To address this issue, the Domestic Violence Act (1994) is being reviewed and the Penal Code was amended to provide greater deterrence for sexual related offences. In addition to strengthening existing and introducing new legislation, preventive and rehabilitative programmes have also been implemented, such as shelter homes and the campaign entitled, "Women Against Violence (WAVE)". Through WAVE, a group of trained community volunteers are created who are able to provide guidance and service to victims of violence. These volunteers are the frontliners in their communities by reporting any occurrence of violence to the appropriate authorities.

9. An integrated one-stop call centre has also been established to allow assistance to all types of victims. This one-stop call centre allows the authorities to respond faster and more effectively to assist not only victims of violence, but also to assist in overall social welfare issues.

10. In addition, Malaysia's Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act was approved by Parliament in May 2007. The Act not only strengthens the legal framework in combating trafficking in persons, but also address the welfare and protection of victims.

Financing for Gender Equality

National Machinery for Women's Advancement

11. The establishment of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD) in 2001 signified a positive move to strengthen the national machinery for women's progress as well as to draw-up mechanisms for the effective partnership between the Government and NGOs to address specific issues related to women. Reflecting the Government's commitment towards women's advancement, the Ministry's operating budget was increased from USD1.3 million in 2001 to USD31.3 million in 2008. The increased allocation has enabled the Ministry to push for greater mandates in advocating gender equality.

12. The national machinery for the advancement of women was further strengthened with the establishment of the Cabinet Committee on Gender Equality headed by the Prime Minister. In order to incorporate gender perspectives in the formulation and implementation of policies, programmes and legislation in various areas of jurisdiction, gender focal points (GFPs) have been established in all ministries and relevant agencies.

13. The National Advisory Council for Women is represented by top women leaders to advise on policy and legislation formulation. To strengthen further the national machinery, the National Council for Women and Family Development is formed at the state and parliamentary constituency levels to provide the link with the grassroots.

14. Programmes implemented with the support of NGOs at the grassroots include legal literacy, skills training, ICT literacy, entrepreneurship and gender sensitisation. Programmes involving men have also been implemented to sensitise men on gender equality.

15. Gender-sensitisation training has been organised for key government officials, particularly those involved in policymaking, the judiciary, and enforcement officers to ensure that women's concerns are mainstreamed into the developmental, judicial and implementation process. Gender sensitisation programmes such as seminars, forums and talks on specific gender issues are also conducted at the state and district levels to create and enhance the awareness of the general public on gender issues.

16. While women in Malaysia have come a long way, efforts are ongoing to address the issue of women in decision-making positions, both in government and the private sector.

Gender Responsive Budget

17. In Malaysia's efforts towards financing for gender equality, the Government recognises the gender budget initiative as a concrete and specific measure that advances the vital principle of gender mainstreaming within Government, and has embarked on a Gender Responsive Budget since 2003. This budgeting system provides an enabling environment for Malaysia to integrate gender perspectives in the policy and budget system of line ministries. The Ministry of Finance has issued Call Circulars for ministries to undertake gender analysis in their budget statements and submissions of their operating programmes.

18. As part of this initiative, the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN), a national training centre for the public service, offers gender budget analysis course as part of their annual training programme. In addition, training is provided for the Budget Review Officers of the Ministry of Finance, as well as the gender focal points of the various ministries and Government agencies. This is an important component of the initiative in order to attain buy-in from the related officers, particularly from the Ministry of Finance, that is critical for the sustainability and success of the gender responsive budget. Officers trained in the workshops are expected to become the main agents of change for the budgeting process in their respective agencies.

19. A manual on gender budgeting was produced in August 2006, to serve as a guideline for government officials, particularly those who are involved with policy formulation and budget planning in undertaking gender budgeting analysis.

Simultaneously, a special report was also produced to increase the awareness of the public at large regarding the gender responsive budget.

20. Though challenges remain towards full implementation of the gender responsive budget initiative, our experience has shown us that cooperation and collaboration with the Ministry of Finance is important as an impetus to mobilize organizations to implement a gender responsive budget, and to increase the capacity and interest within the organisation on gender, policy and macro-economic issues.

Gender Disaggregated Data

21. Monitoring progress and setting benchmarks are essential steps in order for us to ensure the effectiveness of all our initiatives and the progressive realization of our goals. Towards this end, Malaysia has established the Gender Disaggregated Information System (GDIS) to ensure systematic collection and compilation of gender-disaggregated data. The GDIS provides data for gender analysis and planning and it is used as a tool to develop gender responsive policies, strategies and programmes.

22. In implementing the GDIS, it is clear that efforts are needed for systematic and standardised data collection in the public and private sectors, and that it is important for such information to be of both a quantitative and qualitative nature.

Malaysia's Gender Gap Index

23. Another achievement in the area of women's empowerment is the development of Malaysia's Gender Gap Index (MGGI). It is a composite index to measure gender equality in the four dimensions of health, education, economic and empowerment of women for the years 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2004. The time series data showed overall improvements in gender equality in the four areas. The MGGI was recently updated to include data for the year 2006.

Women and Education

24. In Malaysia, the single most vital factor in the empowerment of women has been education. Today, there are more females than males in our institutions of higher learning with 61.4 per cent female enrolment in the Government-assisted universities. It is the view of the Government that better educated women translates into a more economically productive and intellectually vibrant community.

25. Despite the high enrolment of female students in public institutions of higher learning, female enrolment for Ph.D programmes is still lagging behind with 39.1 per cent compared to 60.9 per cent male enrolment. Female students also continued to display an inclination for the arts and soft sciences in the public institutions of higher learning. 68.6 per cent of female students opted for the arts and 66.2 per cent for science and technology. In the technical and vocational fields, female students accounted for only 39.0 per cent of the total enrolment. To address this issue, more female students are encouraged to enter into fields of study such as science and engineering.

Women and Health

26. Women in Malaysia continue to benefit from improvements in health care services. Female life expectancy at birth has improved to 76.3 years compared with 71.8 years for males. Maternal mortality rate also remains low at 0.3 per 1,000 live births. This is due to improved prenatal and antenatal health care as well as access to health and nutrition education.

27. In view of the fact that women, especially young women, are in the high-risk category in terms of their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, greater emphasis is given towards providing information on HIV/AIDS awareness and education. The Government has also implemented an HIV Voluntary Testing and Counselling Programme to conduct testing of pregnant mothers for HIV and to treat them (if tested positive) and their newborn babies. Women found to be HIV-positive are provided with post-test counselling and free anti-retroviral treatment.

28. To promote early detection of breast cancer, the leading cause of cancer deaths for women in Malaysia, the Government provides a subsidy for mammogram screening. With the subsidy and greater promotion to increase awareness for early detection, more women are encouraged to take mammogram screening.

Women and Economy

29. The female labour force participation rate is 45.8 per cent with 3.8 million women in the labour market, which made up 36 per cent of the total labour force. As part of the efforts to realise women's full potential by taking advantage of opportunities in the job market, various skills and entrepreneur training programmes are offered to women. Training programmes are also given to women entrepreneurs to upgrade their businesses.

30. Besides skills training, financial assistance schemes are implemented to facilitate more women to become entrepreneurs. Special assistance schemes for women entrepreneurs include business start up, product and process improvement, market development grant and soft loans for small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Women in Poverty

31. To reduce the incidence of poverty among women, including single mothers and female headed households, the Government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) implement numerous economic, social and training programmes. Financial assistance is provided to women from the low-income group to be involved in micro-credit enterprises. Women in rural areas are also offered opportunities to establish workshops and business premises to facilitate their involvement in entrepreneurship. Training in information and communication technology (ICT) is also conducted to enable these women to increase their productivity and efficiency. The Government is intensifying the implementation of various skills enhancement programmes for poor women especially for single mothers to facilitate their involvement in income generating activities.

NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women

32. Malaysia believes that the sharing of experiences, practices and expertise is essential for the strengthening of the enabling environment and the acceleration of the success of our efforts. During our Chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement, we had hosted a Ministerial Meeting on the Empowerment of Women in the Era of Globalization, where Malaysia's proposal for the setting up of an Institute for the Empowerment of Women for NAM member countries, to be located in Malaysia, was adopted. The Non-Aligned Movement's (NAM) Institute for the Empowerment of Women (NIEW), dedicated to women's development and empowerment, is now operational and has implemented a number of capacity-building and awareness programmes.

Consultative Dialogues

33. To engage women in the development process, consultative dialogues is the practice of the Government where the views and concerns of women are taken into consideration in formulating development policies, devising budget policies, shaping trade policies and amending legislation. Women in Malaysia have made significant advancement in various fields and contributed significantly to the country's economic and social development.

Recommendations to the Commission

34. Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women are inextricably linked to the overall development agenda of a country, especially in developing countries. It is vitally important to have adequate resources allocated for gender equality. Towards this end, Malaysia recommends for the Commission to consider:

- a. According priority in the formulation of transparent criteria by International Donors to facilitate financing for gender equality;
- b. Developing monitoring and evaluation indicators to measure the impact of such financing; and
- c. Continuing to update the Commission of the progress made on financing for gender equality at future sessions of the Commission.

Conclusion

35. In conclusion, the Government of Malaysia will continue to enhance efforts to further improve the status of women to enable them to reach their full potential and contribute towards the social and economic development of the country. Hence, gender mainstreaming will be given emphasis and gender considerations included in the formulation of policies and programmes.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.