



Permanent Mission of

Malaysia

to the United Nations

**STATEMENT BY
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ON

**AGENDA ITEM 3: FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON
WOMEN AND TO THE TWENTY-THIRD SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL
ASSEMBLY, ENTITLED "WOMEN 2000: GENDER EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT
AND PEACE FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY"
OF THE FIFTY-FOURTH SESSION
OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

NEW YORK, 3 MARCH 2010

Mr. Chairperson,

The Government of Malaysia stands by our commitments to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Fourth World Conference on Women provided the international community with a consensus to move forward on issues affecting women. The global policy framework encapsulated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is the tool for all countries, the United Nations system, civil society, as well as individuals, wherever they are. Implicit in the Declaration and Platform for Action is that in efforts for the advancement of women, both women and men can contribute, and both genders have an inherent interest in the matter.

2. Our reviews of this landmark declaration in the years 2000 and 2005, at the five and ten-year review and appraisals respectively, revealed that challenges and obstacles to implementation remained and more needed to be done. This remains the case in our fifteen-year review. While the international community as a whole has made progress in the twelve critical areas outlined in the Platform for Action, and its follow-up outcomes, barriers persist in the fundamental issues of gender equality and empowerment of women that undermines the full realisation of the Platform. We cannot come back again in five years time at the twenty-year review and repeat ourselves.

3. Yet what makes this year different than the past is that conceptually the international community as a whole – its governments and societies, and not only those working on women's issues – has built better awareness of how important it is to invest in women. No longer are women's issues isolated from the rest of government policy and programmes but is recognised as an essential and integral part. The Millennium Development Goals provided for the cross-cutting conceptualisation of issues related to women and girls to issues on the development

agenda – so much to that it is recognized that gender equality is not only a goal in itself, but also a means towards achieving all the other internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

Mr. Chairperson,

4. Allow me to share some information on Malaysia's efforts to implement the Platform for Action and its follow-up:

4.1 On education and training – 97% of girls are enrolled in primary education, the female literacy rate in 2008 was 89.5%, and female enrolment in higher learning institutions is 61 per cent;

4.2 On women and health – The female life expectancy was 76.4 years in 2008 and the maternal mortality rate is 0.3 per 1,000 live births. To promote early detection of breast cancer, a subsidy for mammogram screening was introduced in 2007.

As with all countries, we too see a feminization of HIV/AIDS. In addressing the epidemic, special focus has been given to reducing HIV vulnerability among women, young people and children. Under the National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS (2006-2010), women found to be HIV-positive are provided with post-test counseling and free anti-retroviral treatment. A special task force was established under the Department of Women's Development to address the feminization of the HIV. As part of the synergised efforts between the Government and the NGO, financial assistance is provided to NGOs which provide support services such as drop-in, outreach and counseling as well as providing information to victims of HIV/AIDS, sex workers and transvestites.

4.3 On women and poverty – a microcredit scheme, entitled, *Amanah ikhtiar Malaysia*, has been used since 1987. An impact study showed that borrowers enjoyed an average increase in monthly household income of 593 per cent in 2005. Four critical success factors contribute to the success of this scheme i.e. the usage of a cost effective eligibility test to ensure the loans are disbursed to the right and deserving beneficiaries of the scheme; borrowing procedures are designed in such a way that they are very convenient to the borrowers; rules and regulations for borrowing are easily understood by the borrowers; and a "peer pressure" method is applied on the borrowers which effectively reduces the non-performance of the borrowers.

4.4 On violence against women – The Government of Malaysia recognizes that violence against women is a serious issue that has multi-dimensional causes, including the unequal power balance or relationship between sexes. We undertake a zero tolerance policy towards it and we undertake a holistic approach to this matter that includes removing impunity and prosecuting those who commit violence, as well as protecting and rehabilitating victims

The Malaysian Penal Code was amended in 2006 to include penalties for husbands who subject their wives to unwanted sex. A husband who forces his wife to have unwanted sex with him can now face up to five years in jail. Our Domestic Violence Act 1994 includes marital rape as form of domestic violence, and the Act is being reviewed to enhance its effectiveness, including criminalising emotional violence. In addition to this, the Anti-Trafficking-in-Persons Act was enacted in 2007. The Act, among others seeks to prosecute the offenders and provide protection and shelter to the victims. To date, four shelter homes have been established to provide protection and rehabilitation to trafficked victims.

- 4.5 On women and the economy - in 2008, the female labour force participation rate is 45.7 per cent with 3.95 million women in the labour market, which made up for 36.0 per cent of the total labour force. To increase the participation of women in the labour force, launching grants for setting up a child care centre at the workplace in the public sector was increased. In addition, a subsidy for child care costs is also provided to those who earn below a specified monthly household income.

Various training programmes and financial assistance schemes are also implemented by various agencies to facilitate more women to become entrepreneurs. In addition, the Government includes the development of 4,000 women entrepreneurs by 2012 as one of its key performance indicators.

- 4.6 On women in power and decision-making – In addressing the issue of under-representation of women at the decision-making level, the policy of at least 30 per cent participation of women in decision-making positions at all levels was adopted by the Government on 4 August 2004. There has been a positive advancement in that women make-up 30.5% of the top management positions in the public sector in 2009. Despite this, the numbers of women in decision-making positions in politics and the private sector, remain comparatively low. To enhance the participation on women in decision-making in the private and legislative sectors a plan of action is expected to be submitted to the Government for approval this year

- 4.7 On institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women – the National Council for Women and Family Development was established at the state and parliamentary constituency levels to provide the link with the grassroots in 2002. Gender Focal Points (GFPs) in government ministries and agencies was established in 2005.

- 4.8 On the human rights of women – In 2001, the Federal Constitution was amended to include the word 'gender' as one of the prohibited grounds for discrimination. Following the amendment, various laws were amended to ensure consistency. Reviews are ongoing of other laws and other relevant articles deemed discriminatory against gender in the Federal Constitution.

5. Despite our progress, gaps and challenges remain. These include the impact of the economic crisis, the increasing feminization of HIV/AIDS, violence against women and continuing gender stereotypes and attitudes which create institutional and societal barriers to mainstreaming a gender perspective in implementation of policies and programmes. Additionally, continued monitoring and analysis of progress is needed. For example, in a knowledge-based economy, science, technology and vocational skills provide an advantage, but many women and girls continue to display an inclination for the arts and soft sciences, which can lessen opportunities and career advancement.

Mr. Chairperson,

6. Malaysia looks forward to the successful conclusion of the ongoing work taking place with regard to the consolidated gender entity within the System-Wide Coherence discussions. We welcome the document containing elements of the new Entity which the JCC has submitted to the Co-Facilitators of the system-wide coherence process.

7. Malaysia recognizes civil society, including 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 national budget to implement activities and programmes for the advancement of women.

Mr. Chairperson

8. Malaysia reaffirms its commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and looks forward to productive and successful session.

Thank you.