



Permanent Mission of
Malaysia
to the United Nations

STATEMENT BY
THE HONOURABLE DATUK AZALINA DATO' OTHMAN SAID
MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS MALAYSIA
AT THE PLENARY MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ON THE TEN-YEAR REVIEW OF
THE WORLD PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR YOUTH
NEW YORK, 6 OCTOBER 2005

Mr. President,

1. On behalf of the people and Government of Malaysia, I take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary General of the United Nations on his timely decision to convene this congregation of distinguished personalities empowered to deliberate upon youth perspectives, policies and interventions across the globe.
2. The 10th anniversary celebrations of the World Programme of Action on Youth Towards 2000 and Beyond (WPAY) introduced in 1995 is yet another attestation of the strategic implementation of youth development programmes by the United Nations.
3. These periodic reviews serve to accord governments and institutions the opportunities to consult, deliberate at the highest levels and upgrade the quality of programmes in the respective countries.
4. For Malaysia, the National Youth Consultative Council established in 1972 is the highest body that acts as a youth parliament. This council provides a forum for both government and non- government organisations to meet, discuss and debate common issues related to youth development programmes.
5. In 1985, in conjunction with the International Youth Year adopted by the UN, Malaysia formulated the National Youth Policy. This policy was further reviewed in 1997 and became known as the National Youth Development Policy, which provides guidelines to formulate and implement programmes.
6. In 2004, the Ministry then embarked on its 11-point Malaysian Youth Development Action Plan, which in many ways runs parallel to the WPAY. This blueprint forms the national framework that spearheads youth development until 2020; the year Malaysia aspires to achieve developed-nation status.

7. One of the outcomes for the Malaysian Youth Development Action Plan is the creation of the Malaysian Institute for Research in Youth Development. Among the Institute's main objectives are to conduct research and provide better understanding of the needs and issues relevant to young people from the different segments of society.

8. To ensure that our youth planning is on the right track towards achieving our objectives, we are in preparation to embark on an empirical study to determine the Malaysian youth behavioural and well-being index. It is hoped that these indices will provide the government with more accurate measurable norms to chart the progress of youth.

9. Simultaneously, another instrument namely the Malaysian Youth Act is being enacted to give direction for proper and systematic youth development. The Act will also encompass appropriate intervention from other ministries and relevant agencies to improve coordination and implementation of policies and guidelines pertaining to youth development. This Youth Act will ultimately serve to protect and defend the rights and interests of the younger generation as it promotes and incorporates an effective delivery system.

Mr President,

10. Malaysia recognises youth as the agents of change who are supposed to be receptive to new ideas, adoption of technologies and are willing to make changes. To harness the potential of the younger generation, the National Youth Development Plan revolves around a three-pronged strategy, namely leadership training, acquisition of vocational and technical skills and entrepreneurship.

11. As envisioned by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Abdullah Hj Ahmad Badawi, those in leadership positions should be innovative, competitive and at the same time be able to retain Malaysian values. To achieve this aspiration Malaysia is strengthening its existing youth leadership training programmes as well as proposing new leadership institutes to prepare more young leaders in the various sectors.

12. In politics, greater efforts are geared towards recruiting the younger generation to participate in the political processes of the country. Members in the Youth Wing are being groomed to succeed the current leadership.

13. To cater to the growing needs for skills training and to enhance employability of youth, the government has numerous youth training entities such as Mara Institute of Vocational Training, Industrial Training Institutes and the ministry's own National Skills Training Institutes.

14. To accommodate the increase in the number of school leavers entering the job market, who incidentally form the bulk of the unemployed, these establishments are proposing to conduct multi-session classes including non-residential, night and weekend classes.

15. To assist aspiring entrepreneurs, we initially had in place the entrepreneurship trust fund. We are now forging forward to establishing the Malaysian Youth Economic Development Council, which is an inter-ministerial set up to better coordinate and provide capital assistance to budding youth entrepreneurs.

Mr President,

16. Malaysia, like other nations, is not spared from social maladies that accompany development and modernisation. With progress comes the looming threat of HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, premarital sex, teenage pregnancies, religious extremism, to mention a few. To counter such negative indulgences the Malaysian government has designed several intervention programmes.

17. *Rakan Muda* (Young Friends) is an outreach programme aimed at addressing social ills by offering avenues for youth to fill their time productively through the nine lifestyle programme packages. Introduced in 1994, it is now being revitalised to meet present and future challenges in the midst of globalisation and an ever-changing youth culture.

18. Another intervention program addressing drug abuse and HIV is the *Belia Benci Dadah* campaign (Youth Against Drugs). This campaign empowers youth to make their own decisions on the options and choices in life. Built on a youth for youth concept, it also mobilises university and college students to play a part in disseminating information on the detriments of drug abuse.

19. Youth and sports are inseparable. The ministry capitalises on this fact by introducing a host of sports activities. For those who want to excel in sports, we have identified 8 core competitive sports. As for the general public, we offer Sports For All where youths can be involved in positive activities during their idle time. The government has allocated US\$30 million for this purpose. To ensure good participation, the government will also provide adequate facilities in the form of community sports complexes in every parliamentary constituency. In an effort to encourage more young females to live a healthy and active lifestyle, the first National Women's Games will be launched in December 2005.

20. Realising that each segment of the youth community differs, programmes and activities are tailored to suit the individual needs and situations.

Mr. President,

21. Globalisation is often closely linked to Information Communication Technology. In preparing Malaysians for the transition to becoming a knowledge society, the government has initiated various schemes to encourage computer ownership and access to information through ICT. To facilitate this objective, the government launched its One House, One Computer campaign, in addition to giving credit incentives and tax rebates for the purchase of PCs, and the creation of smart schools. As of 2005, we have 11 million internet users, or 38 per cent of the population. This is a jump from 50,000 users in 1997.

22. I am confident that the youth of the world can be the key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation. They will rise to the occasion to help re-chart the course of history where the focus of efforts of benevolent governments and institutions would be to aspire untiringly to attain global peace, solidarity and prosperity.

Mr. President,

23. In this regard, and with the view to increasing youth participation and involvement in its work, I wish to propose that the United Nations consider:

- a. Strengthening the Youth Unit, with the possibility of expanding it, to give due attention to the growing importance of issues related to youth and their participation in achieving the Millennium Development Goals;
- b. Providing assistance to Member States, upon request, for the participation of youth representatives on a continuing basis during relevant discussions in the General Assembly, as well as Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and its functional commissions;
- c. Continuing the convening of the informal, interactive round-table discussions, as well as organising other events to provide more opportunity and encourage greater youth participation in areas of specific interests and immediate concern to youth in the United Nations;
- d. The continuation of the World Youth Forum;
- e. Conducting regional consultations, through its Regional Commissions, with Member States and youth organizations to assist and evaluate the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth;
- f. The formulation of a Youth Development Index to provide a standard indicator that would help monitor and evaluate progress made by WPAY
- g. To establish the World Economic Youth Fund to provide financial assistance in entrepreneurship for the young.

Mr. President,

24. The time has come for us to grow younger. The age of youth is here. The UN needs to be the pathfinder for all the world's youth. It needs to chart a clear course. For, very soon, it will be the youth who will be showing us the way.

I thank you.