

**63RD SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN,
11 – 15 MARCH 2019
NEW YORK**

GENERAL DISCUSSION AGENDA ITEM 3

**COUNTRY STATEMENT
BY**

**DATUK DR. ROSE LENA BINTI LAZEMI
SECRETARY GENERAL
MINISTRY OF WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,
MALAYSIA**

Madam Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my country's heartfelt gratitude to member states for supporting Malaysia's candidature to CSW and making it possible for Malaysia to be elected as member for the term 2019 - 2023.

2. Malaysia also renews our commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in all critical areas and the outcome of the twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly. Malaysia particularly acknowledges the vital role of women and the need for their full and equal participation and leadership in all areas. In this regard, we commend and support the initiative by the UN Secretary-General of the System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity.

3. My delegation also wishes to associate ourselves with the statement delivered by G77 and China, ASEAN and GOFOP as represented by the State of Palestine, the Kingdom of Thailand and Mexico respectively.

4. An adequate retirement income forms a big part of social protection, and is something that women deserve, regardless of whether the work is spent unpaid at home, in the paid workforce, or a combination of both. Homemakers' contributions to the social and economic wellbeing of their family and community is invaluable. At the same time, they are vulnerable to economic risks due to their reliance on others for income. As the vast majority of homemakers are women who tend to live longer, there is the added risk of inadequate savings and potential risk of poverty during old age or retirement. To address this, in July 2018, Malaysia launched the "Suri or Homemaker's Incentive to extend the social security benefits enjoyed by members of the workforce to unpaid homemakers. For a minimum monthly contribution of about USD1.20, the Government contributes an additional amount of approximately USD9.60. Some of the benefits include annual dividends on retirement savings, incapacitation and death benefit.

5. Coverage of the Suri Incentive includes homemakers, single mothers and widows within a household. The first phase is targeted for those registered with the National Poverty Database. As of February 2019, about 81,000 women have registered under the Suri Incentive across Malaysia.

6. As an effort to improve public services and sustainable infrastructure, a Women's Assembly was introduced at the Malaysian Urban Forum held in February this year, as a follow-up to last year's 9th World Urban Forum. The Women's Assembly served as a platform to address challenges, identify opportunities, build partnerships and overcome barriers to ensure public services and infrastructure are gender responsive and meet the unique needs of all demographic groups.

7. Malaysia is committed to achieving the 30% target of women in decision-making position. Currently 36% of the public service top management is comprised of women. For the Top 100 Public Listed Companies (PLC), women on the Board of Directors stood at 24.4% in 2018. There has also been an increase of women parliamentarians following the last general elections in May 2018 at 14.4%. Malaysia also saw the appointment of the first woman Deputy Prime Minister who is also the Minister for Women, Family and Community Development.

8. Malaysia has also consistently taken measures to increase women's participation in the labour market, which is targeted at 56.5% by 2020. Among the policies introduced to support women's participation are:

- (i) special economic empowerment programmes for women;
- (ii) the extension of fully paid maternity leave in the public sector from 60 to 90 days;
- (iii) incentives to promote the establishment of affordable and quality child care centres at the work place and within communities; and
- (iv) legislation on sexual harassment.

9. Recognising the need for improved access to financial resources to further increase the number of women entrepreneurs, Malaysia's largest government-backed microfinance institution has extended its financing only to women due to their good repayment performance and as of March 2018, about 400,000 women have received microcredit assistance.

10. Another initiative is a women entrepreneur financing scheme which offers loans of up to USD245,000. Launched in October 2018, this initiative is focused on propelling women micro entrepreneurs for business expansion and growth.

11. These are just some of the ongoing initiatives to empower women and promote their equitable access to resources in Malaysia. We will continue efforts to enhance social protection systems, improve access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equity and empowerment of women and girls.

12. Last but not least, congratulations to the Bureau as well as the Secretariat on the excellent arrangements made for this 63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Thank you.