



Permanent Mission of
Malaysia
to the United Nations

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**STATEMENT BY
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FIRST SECRETARY, PERMANENT MISSION OF MALAYSIA TO THE
UNITED NATIONS
ON
AGENDA ITEM 62: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE
OF THE 64TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK, 12 OCTOBER 2009**

Mr. Chairman,

The work of the General Assembly, through its Third Committee, on this Agenda Item on the Advancement of Women holds great significance this year as we approach the milestone of 2010. Next year will be the year in which we commemorate the 15th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; 2010 will be the year in which we continue our work on the gender architecture; within the Economic and Social Council, the theme for the Council's 2010 annual ministerial review is "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women"; and of course, we will be reviewing the Millennium Development Goals. Our work this year thus requires a continued and reinvigorated commitment by all countries to meet the goals and targets set, to ensure that we overcome the barriers that persist in our common pursuit towards gender equality and the advancement of women.

Mr. Chairman,

2. Women play an important role in all spheres of society – from roles at the basic societal structure as encompassed in the family, to the larger community structures, the economy, government and political decision-making. It is the responsibility of all countries to ensure that they can fulfil their potentials in whatever field. Instituting a gender perspective remains the approach favoured at the international context. We must continue this endeavour of promoting this approach. While there is agreement among States on this need through the commitments made in the Beijing Declaration and other internationally agreed fora, implementation remains difficult. However, as is clear from the various reports from the Secretary-General, we need to overcome the institutional, traditional or other constraints that prevent its full realisation.

3. Gender stereotypes continue to remain real barriers to the overall goal of the advancement of women. At the international level, including here at the United Nations, we are aware that the discomfort in addressing this issue crosses all regional lines, and crosses different levels of development. We have found that even the most advanced, open and liberal countries are averse to discussing this issue, just as much as the countries that may be deemed more conservative. We understand that discussing stereotypes does lead to other discussions which touch on traditional or cultural values. These are difficult for policy-makers and even more so to implement. Even in my own country, chipping away long-held biases and ways of thinking require strenuous efforts. But the outcome is worthwhile, and the international community should not shirk from this.

Mr. Chairman,

4. Malaysia is fully supportive of efforts towards creating a gender balance within the United Nations system.

5. We wish to express Malaysia's support to the Secretary-General's continued multi-year campaign to end violence against women. 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. The issue of violence against women is a priority for the Government of Malaysia, and we take a zero tolerance policy towards it. 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

6. Since 2003, Malaysia 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".

7. We recognize 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 national budget to implement activities and programmes for the advancement of women.

Mr. Chairman,

8. In terms of what we are doing domestically, the Government of Malaysia is cognizant of our obligations as a signatory to the CEDAW and pledge to the implementation of 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.

9. As we approach the 2010 review of the MDGs, allow me to share some preliminary figures which relate to women:

- 9.1 On MDG 2 of achieving universal primary education – 97% of girls are enrolled in primary education. To date, our education policy has resulted in the female enrollment of more than 60 per cent in higher learning institutions;
- 9.2 With regard to MDG 3 on gender equality and the empowerment of women, of the Federal Constitution includes 'gender' as one of the prohibitive grounds for discrimination. At present women comprise 22.8 percent of the public sector's heads of ministries and agencies in Malaysia. Likewise, in 2007, more than 27 per cent of registered professionals were women, including with 44 per cent of accountants and 45.7 per cent of lawyers.
- 9.3 With regard to MDG 5 of improving maternal health, the maternal mortality rate in Malaysia in 2007 has been reduced to 0.3 per 1,000 live births from 2.8 in 1957;
- 9.4 On MDG 6 of combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other diseases, although Malaysia has made great success in reducing malaria and other communicable diseases, HIV/AIDS still remains a challenge, especially in its feminisation of HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Chairman,

10. Malaysia looks forward to a successful and positive outcome to the various events to be held next year. It is clear for us that a strong, unified political message by all countries is needed to renew our commitment. But we caution that we should not renew our differences. This is the challenge on this issue gender equality and the advancement of women– an issue of vital importance for all countries, and an issue which brings out strong emotions. Our purpose is served best when we focus on the whole spectrum of challenges that affect both developing and developed countries, and not simply choosing individual issues over others. As the incoming President of the ECOSOC next year, we will work with all delegations for a successful outcome.

11. 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.

