

United Nations Development Programme



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Welcome Remarks

**Towards Achieving At Least
30 Percent Participation of Women At Decision Making Levels in
Malaysia**

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Yang Berhormat Puan Noriah Kasnon

Deputy Minister of Women, Family and Community Development

Yang Berbahagia Datuk Nor Hayati Sulaiman

Deputy Secretary General, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development

Yang Berusaha Puan Margaret Ho

Advisor to the Minister of Women, Family and Community Development

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning and a very warm welcome to the National Workshop to discuss the Plan of Action "Towards Achieving At Least 30 Percent Participation Of Women At Decision Making Levels In Malaysia."

UNDP would like to commend the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD) for their efforts in advancing the status of women in the country. UNDP continues to be a proud partner of the Ministry in projects that always support inclusive development. As we are all aware, development is about improving the lives of all human beings, be it for the females or males. Hence, the right to development is a right for women, as well as for men.

Equality between women and men is fair and is right. It is a worthy goal by itself, one which lies at the heart of human rights and one which is also central to progress in human development. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is committed to making gender equality a reality, not only because it is a moral imperative, but more so because it is a way to promote prosperity and well-being for all. The relative status of women and men, the interaction between gender and race, class and ethnicity, and questions of rights, control, ownership, power and voice – all these have a critical impact on the success and sustainability of every development intervention.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Notably, there have been profound changes in the status and role of women over the past two decades. The Beijing+5 review recorded progress in most countries, especially the

narrowing of gender gaps particularly in education and health. Women have entered the labour force in unprecedented numbers, increasing their potential participation in decision making at various levels, starting with the household. However, the Beijing+5 review also highlighted such progress to be slow and uneven.

In addition to the basic inequalities in access to education and resources, and an unequal share of the burdens of poverty, women continue to be under-represented in formal decision-making structures. Whilst women's contributions to the global economy are growing rapidly, women's labour remains undervalued and under-counted in national accounts; and data disaggregated by gender are still poorly developed.

Although women are increasingly active in community support systems, gender disparities continue to persist in public positions at all levels, be it locally, nationally, regionally or globally. As of 2004, official figures highlighted that only 17 countries had achieved the interim goal set in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action of having women hold at least 30 percent of national legislative seats.

Distinguished Guests

In view of the abovementioned scenario, boosting women's participation in decision making needs to go beyond raw numbers to encompass the complex relationship between power, poverty and participation. Women want and need to be able to participate in the decisions that affect them, their families, communities and the population as a whole. New mechanisms that allow women to directly influence broader political and economic spheres need to be established.

Therefore, we hope that today's workshop will look at issues and challenges that Malaysian women currently faced and provide recommendations to overcome all the barriers and hindrances that obstruct their progress. The workshop will be a platform for participatory approach to the problem by stakeholders in the public and private sectors; and civil society, including NGOs and academia.

Ladies and Gentlemen

On this very note, I am pleased that UNDP have successfully collaborated with MWCDFD on this project which aims to assist the Ministry to formulate and implement a Plan of Action to achieve at least 30 percent participation of women at decision making levels in Malaysia as envisaged in the Ninth Malaysia Plan 2006-2010. The workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to discuss and provide inputs to the Plan of Action by way of sharing of experiences, knowledge and lessons learnt in gender mainstreaming and contributing towards greater gender equality women's empowerment and the promotion of women's rights in public and political life, as envisaged in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment by 2015.

Let me conclude by thanking the Honorable Deputy Minister Puan Noriah Kasnon and the Deputy Secretary General Ybhg Datuk Nor Hayati Sulaiman for their presence here this morning despite their very busy schedules. I also want to wish all participants here today a productive workshop.

Thank you.