

**INTRODUCTION OF COMBINED INITIAL AND SECOND PERIOD REPORT
TO THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION
AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW) BY DATUK FAIZAH MOHD TAHIR,
SECRETARY - GENERAL OF THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN, FAMILY AND
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MALAYSIA, 24 MAY 2006 NEW YORK**

Notes for PowerPoint presentation

SLIDE 1

- Madame Chair, distinguished members of the Committee, ladies and gentlemen. Before I begin, let me introduce members of my delegation. **(please refer to the delegation list)**. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for being able to present our First and Second Report on CEDAW. We are also pleased to share with Committee Members the achievements made by Malaysian women since the accession of CEDAW in 1995.
- As a signatory to the Convention and pledge of good faith to the Beijing Platform for Action, the Government of Malaysia is cognisant of its obligations. The Government is committed in addressing women's issues and therefore, committed to realising gender equality in the country. As a measure of good governance, we remain open to learning from and adopting the best practices of others, in order to continue to overcome setbacks to the fuller realisation of women's advancement in Malaysia. We are confident that this review will provide insights to further enhance our efforts in achieving gender equality in Malaysia.
- My presentation this morning will provide an update of the achievements of women in Malaysia up to the year 2005.

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- To begin with, let me briefly indicate the location of Malaysia on the world map. Malaysia is located in the heart of Southeast Asia, slightly north of the Equator. Consisting of 329,735 square kilometres, Malaysia is divided into two distinct parts, Peninsular Malaysia and the provinces of Sabah and Sarawak in North Borneo.

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- My presentation this morning will highlight the achievements of women in the following priority areas as identified by CEDAW:
 - i) Women and education;
 - ii) Women and health;
 - iii) Women and economy;
 - iv) Women in politics;
 - v) Women in decision making; and

- vi) Legislation pertaining to women.
- I would also like to bring to the attention of Madame Chair and members of the Committee, the institutional mechanisms that have been established towards achieving gender equality in Malaysia and the challenges in realising the implementation of CEDAW.

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Basic statistics

- These are some basic statistics of Malaysia.
- The Malaysian population increased to 26.1 million in 2005 from 23.3 million in 2000. Likewise, the labour force also increased to 10.9 million from 9.6 million for the same year.
- With the increase in employment to 10.5 million, the economy was able to register full employment with the unemployment rate at 3.5 per cent in 2005.
- Per capita income in Malaysia increased to USD\$4,781 in 2005 from USD\$3,516 in 2000.

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Population Profile (1)

- The Malaysian demography in 2005 is as shown on the slide.
- The female population accounted for 49.1 per cent of the total population in 2005.
- The annual growth rate of the population is 2.3 per cent for the period 2000-2005.

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Population Profile (2)

- The family structure in Malaysia is moving towards a nuclear family with an average household size of 4.6 persons.
- The mean age at first marriage for men is 28.9 years old compared to 25.3 years old for women.

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Literacy Rate

- There was an increase in the literacy rate for females from 85.4 per cent in 2000 to 88.1 per cent in 2004, largely due to their access to and availability of educational opportunities.

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- In terms of employment by occupation, except for the category of clerical work where the number of women is higher than men, there are still significant gaps between men and women in the other categories, e.g., legislators and top management category.
- However, the smaller gap between men and women in the professional category reflects women's higher educational attainment.

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Student enrolment primary and secondary school

- Student enrolment in government assisted schools shows that the enrolment of females in primary and secondary schools reflected the gender ratio in the country, accounting for about half of the total enrolment.
- The availability of affordable and equal access to education opportunities through the years enabled the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of gender equality and the elimination of disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005.
- As showed in the slide, the enrolment of female students at the tertiary level (pre-university) outnumbered the enrolment of male students.

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Student enrolment in public institutions of higher learning

- Likewise, the student enrolment in public institutions of higher learning also shows the higher education attainment of women in Malaysia.
- Despite the high enrolment of female students in public institutions of higher learning, female enrolment for Ph.D programmes is still lagging behind with 38.6 per cent compared to 61.4 per cent male enrolment in 2004.
- In general, the enrolment of women in public institutions of higher learning continued to increase from 61.0 per cent in 2000 to 63.4 per cent in 2005.

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Field of study

- This chart shows that female students continued to display an inclination for the arts and the soft sciences in the public institutions of higher learning. The chart shows 71 per cent and 68 per cent of female students opted for the arts and science & technology, respectively. In the technical and vocational field, female students accounted for 41 per cent of the enrolment.
- More female students will be encouraged to enter into fields of study such as science and engineering. Career guidance programmes will be implemented at the primary education level to instil greater awareness among female students and parents regarding opportunities in professional and technical fields.

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Statistics on health

- Women continued to benefit from improvements in health care services. For example, female life expectancy at birth improved from 75.1 years in 2000 to 76.4 years in 2005 compared with 70.0 years and 70.6 years respectively, for males.
- Maternal mortality rate remains low at 0.3 per 1,000 live births. This is due to improved antenatal and postnatal health care as well as access to health and nutrition education.
- Total fertility rate decreased from 2.9 per woman in 2000 to 2.7 in 2005.

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Safe Motherhood Initiative

- One of the major strategies to improve maternal health is the Safe Motherhood Initiative.
- The Safe Motherhood Initiative was launched in 1987 as part of the global effort to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity by at least half by the year 2000.
- The initiative aims to enhance the quality and safety of girl's and women's lives through the adoption of a combination of health and non-health strategies.
- The initiative places special emphasis on the need for better and more widely available maternal health services, the extension of family planning education and services as well as effective measures aimed at improving the status of women.

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HIV/AIDS Preventions

- In view of the fact that women, especially young women, are in the high-risk category in terms of their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, greater emphasis is given towards providing information on HIV/AIDS awareness and education.
- Despite the efforts, the proportion of women with HIV infection increased from 7.9 per cent in 2001 (466 cases of a total of 5,938 cases) to 11.6 per cent (358 cases from 3,089 cases) as of June 2005.
- The HIV Voluntary Testing and Counseling Programme, which was launched in 1998 to conduct testing of pregnant mothers for HIV and to treat them (if tested positive) and their newborn babies, is intensified.
- Women found to be HIV-positive are provided with post-test counselling and free anti-retroviral treatment, resulting in the reduction of mother-to-child transmission by 4.0 per cent, much lower than the 30 per cent estimated rate of vertical transmission without treatment.

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Top 10 causes of death

- Here is the top 10 list on the causes of death for males and females in Malaysia.
- Similar to men, the number one cause of death for Malaysian women is heart disease (21.2%), followed by cerebrovascular disease (12.1%).

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Nur Sejahtera (wellness)

- Recognising the importance of promotive and preventive health towards ensuring that women remain healthy, greater emphasis is given to the implementation of health education and awareness programmes.
- In this regard, the *Nur Sejahtera* wellness programme was introduced in 2004 to educate women on the importance of regular medical examinations and healthy lifestyles.
- The *Nur Sejahtera* programme offers services such as family planning, health education, reproductive health screening and counselling.
- Mobile clinics will also be provided under the *Nur Sejahtera* programme to increase accessibility to health care services.
- The first clinic has recently been launched in conjunction with Mother's Day 2006.
- In addition, *Health Line* was introduced in 2005 to provide comprehensive and integrated online information on non-communicable diseases such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular illnesses.

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Health programmes

- Other health programmes are being developed to further improve women's health status through education and behaviour change such as healthy cooking demonstration and public education campaigns.

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Women in employment

- Women accounted for 48 per cent of the working age population of 15-64 years. The female labour force participation rate increased from 44.7 per cent in 1995 to 47.3 per cent in 2004. The number of women in the labour market increased from 2.7 million in 1995 to 3.7 million in 2004. Women are mainly involved in the manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade as well as the agriculture sector.

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Distribution of employed female by educational attainment

- This chart shows the distribution of employed female by educational attainment, 1995-2004.
- It can be seen that more and more of the women who were employed have higher educational attainment.
- The percentage of employed female with tertiary education has increased from 12.8 per cent in 1995 to 16.5 per cent in 2000 and further increased to 22.7 per cent in 2004.
- Employed female with secondary education, meanwhile, showed a decline from 51.6 per cent in 2000 to 50.6 per cent in 2004.

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- On the other hand, the percentage of employed males with tertiary education showed only a slight increase i.e., from 10.3 per cent in 1995 to 12.5 per cent in 2000 and further to 15.7 per cent in 2004.
- It is interesting to note that for the males (as opposed to females), there was an increase in the number of employed males with secondary education from 53.0 per cent in 1995 to 57.1 per cent in 2004.

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- This chart on the distribution of employed female shows the following trends:
 - i) most women join the labour market at a later age (25 to 29 years old) due to longer years of schooling; and
 - ii) the percentage of women employed declined as the age-group increases.

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Trend of distribution of employed male

- A similar trend can be seen with regard to the employed males.
- The rate of decline of employed males by age group is somewhat less steep compared to females.

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- This can be seen clearly in this slide.
- This trend indicates that more male workers stay in the labour market compared to female workers.

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Time use survey

- Approximately 7.7 million women were in the working age category in 2003 but only 47% of them were employed. The rest were homemakers.
- The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development together with the Department of Statistics undertook a study with the objective of quantifying the value of unpaid care work. Based on a time use survey, 32,264 respondents were interviewed. The study found that:
 - i) Of the total amount of unpaid care work, women did 75.6 per cent while men did only 24.4 per cent.
 - ii) Unpaid care work was valued at RM100 billion or 25.5 per cent of Malaysian GDP in 2003. Out of this RM100 billion, women contributed RM75.6 billion.

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Poverty eradication

- Incidence of poverty among female-headed households declined from 16.9 per cent in 1999 to 12.5 per cent in 2002.
- The reduction in poverty was realised as a result of various programmes undertaken by the government such as:
 - i) income generating programmes
e.g.- handicraft, food processing and sewing as well as agro-based projects (livestock rearing, aquaculture and farming)
 - ii) training and awareness programmes for poor and single mothers
e.g.- computer literacy
- motivational courses
- financial management skills; and
 - iii) other poverty eradication programmes
such as Housing Assistance Programme to provide basic and safe living quarters to targeted poor groups in the rural areas. During the period of 2001-2004, 4,349 (40.8%) units of houses were built for women, compared with 6,318 (59.2%) units for men.

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Women in the Lower House

- Women's representation in the Lower House of Parliament significantly increased from 5.3 per cent in 1990 to 10.4 per cent in 1999. However, the percentage of women representatives slightly dropped to 9.6 per cent in 2004. (1990, 1999 and 2004 were the general election years). In terms of numbers, women representatives increased from 9 members in 1990 to 20 members in 1999 and it further increased to 21 members in the last election.

- Although the percentage of women representation in the Lower House has declined, currently 12 out of 17 women elected (70.5%) from the ruling party were given posts either as minister, deputy minister or parliamentary secretary.

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Women in the Upper House

- Women's representation in the Upper House of Parliament (the Senate) steadily increased from 18.2 per cent in 1990 to 29.7 per cent in 2000. This was further increased in 2005 to 32.3 per cent, which surpasses the at least 30 per cent target for women in decision-making.

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Women in State Legislative Assembly

- In the State Legislative Assembly (ADUN), women members have increased from 5.5 per cent in 1999 to 6.3 per cent in 2004.

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Women ministers

- Women ministers increased from 2 out of 25 in 1990 to 3 out of a total of 32 Cabinet Ministers in 2006. Women deputy ministers also increased from 2 out of 30 in 1990 to 3 out of a total of 39 Deputy Ministers in 2006. Significantly, women parliamentary secretaries increased from zero out of 14 in 1990 to 6 parliamentary secretaries out of a total of 20 in 2006.
- To increase the participation of women in political life, one of the measures undertaken by the main political parties is the establishment of a new wing for young women.

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Women at Decision-Making Level

- In addressing the issue of under-representation of women at the decision-making level, the Government has adopted the policy of at least 30 per cent women in decision-making in the public sector in August 2004.
- The MWFCD is currently working together with the UNDP to embark on an Action Plan - "Towards Achieving 30% Participation of Women at Decision Making Level in Malaysia" for both the public and private sectors. The project aims at strengthening the MWFCD's capacity to formulate and implement an Action Plan to achieve at least 30 per cent of women at decision-making levels in Malaysia, as envisaged in the Ninth Malaysia Plan. The Action Plan will focus on:
 - i) Assessing and analyzing the status of women in decision making in the legislative, executive and judicial arms of the government and in the private sector;

- ii) Documenting and sharing the good practices of countries, which have achieved at least 30 per cent participation of women in decision making; and
- iii) Formulating advocacy measures to ensure buy-in of the policies, programmes and activities of the Action Plan.

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Women in other areas

- Besides politics, women are also involved at the decision-making level in other areas. For instance, women comprised 11.5 per cent of the local authority councillors, 10.2 per cent as directors on the boards of selected companies listed on Bursa Malaysia (Malaysian stock exchange), 11.0 per cent on the board of directors in government-linked companies (GLCs) and 18.8 per cent in the top management in the public service.
- There are also a number of women holding prestigious posts in the country such as the Governor of the Central Bank, Federal Court Judge (1), Secretaries General (3), Heads of Departments (5), State Secretary (1) and State Financial Officer (1).
- In a recent development, the government has appointed the first woman vice chancellor of a university, first woman president of a local authority, first woman state deputy chief of police and first woman village chief.
- The government realises that the percentage of women at the decision-making level is still low and is making conscious efforts to increase their representation.

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(No notes)

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Legislation

- Generally, laws enacted in Malaysia do not make any distinction between men and women. In line with Malaysia's accession to CEDAW, several legislations have been reviewed and amended by the Government to ensure compliance with CEDAW.

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Article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution

- On August 1, 2001, Article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution was amended to include the word 'gender'. By virtue of the amendment, the Federal Constitution, which is the supreme law of the country, prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender in any other laws.

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- Following this amendment, various efforts have been made to ensure that laws, policies and procedures (existing and new) are consistent with CEDAW.

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Pensions Act & Land (Group Settlement Areas) Act

- The Pensions Act was amended in 2002 so that widows will not lose their pensions even after they remarry. The purpose of this new ruling is to protect and ensure the continued well-being of widows and their children.
- The Land (Group Settlement Areas) Act 1960 (Revised 1994) which was amended by Parliament in 2002, allows wives or ex-wives or the next-of-kin of settlers - who have jointly developed the estate - to become joint owners of the land settlement. Prior to this, only men or husbands were owners of the land settlement.

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Penal Code

- The government is very concerned about the issue of violence against women.
- In this regard, the government through the Parliamentary Select Committee, which was established in 2004 has reviewed and completed its report on the amendments to the Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code to provide greater deterrence for sexual related offenders.
- Through the Select Committee, NGOs and individuals have been consulted.
- The review took into consideration a wider definition of the term 'rape' and provision of stiffer penalties.

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Domestic Violence Act

- The Domestic Violence Act, 1994 is currently under review by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. The reviewing committee involves relevant government agencies as well as NGOs.
- Some of the proposed amendments include: -
 - i) The definition of "domestic violence" is expanded to include emotional, mental and psychological forms of domestic violence and the usage of drugs or intoxicating substance on the victim without his/her consent;
 - ii) To extend the duration of interim protection order from the time the investigations are completed until the time the case is brought to court;
 - iii) Prohibition and restraining of perpetrator from entering certain premises to also include premises such as the safe place or shelter where the victim is placed; and
 - iv) To add a new provision that would facilitate the victim the right to compensation.

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Sexual Harassment

- In order to increase the participation of women in the labour market and to enhance the safety of women at the work place, the Ministry of Human Resources is taking necessary actions to amend the relevant laws, i.e., Employment Act 1955, Industrial Relation Act 1967 and Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994 to include protection against sexual harassment.
- For the public sector, the Government has formulated a set of guidelines to deal with sexual harassment at the work place. These guidelines were introduced with a view to creating a more harmonious working environment and increasing the level of integrity among officers in the public sector.

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Islamic Family Law

- Islamic Family Law is a subject matter within the jurisdiction of the States. However, the Federal Government is always concerned with this law because it determines the strength of family institution and the harmony of Islamic community. As a result of this, the Federal Government has formulated a model law with the aim to protect and safeguard women's rights and interests, especially in controlling polygamy, division of jointly acquired property, payment of maintenance and improvement of the Syariah courts administration. Unfortunately, the noble intentions and the good faith of the Government were misunderstood. The controversy arose due to misunderstanding of the relevant provisions of the model law.
- Women thought that the provisions of the model law will deprive them of their rights, their dignity, their money and their property.
- For example, they thought that the new provision pertaining to joint property discriminates against them, whereby a man before embarking upon a second marriage has the right to claim joint property which would include the women's inherited property, personal property or gifts. In actual fact, this is not true.
- In order to avoid misunderstanding and most importantly to uphold the dignity of the Syariah, the Government has taken all necessary steps to make the necessary amendments to ensure the noble intention of the Government is embodied in the Act.
- The Syariah Community, a consultative body that was established under the purview of the Attorney General's Chambers of Malaysia, was immediately tasked to review the Islamic Family Law Act. The members include relevant government agencies, experts, academicians, scholars, Syariah law practitioners and NGOs (such as Bar Council, Association of Women Lawyers, Sisters in Islam, Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia [ABIM] and Jamaah Islah Malaysia [JIM]).
- Therefore, all relevant parties have been consulted to ensure that the above intentions are well understood by the public.
- It is agreed that the Act needs to be amended to clarify on certain matters. E.g. a new paragraph is proposed to redefine the definition of joint property by giving a detailed explanation of its scope such as property acquired by the wife during the marriage through her sole efforts is not joint property. Property belonging to the

husband or wife before the marriage or present, gift, inheritance or any other property received before or during the marriage is not joint property.

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National machinery on women

- This slide illustrates the institutional mechanisms established to achieve gender equality.
- For your info, Madam Chair, the MWFCD and the Department of Women's Development were established in 2001. As the national machinery, the Ministry and the Department are responsible to lead the efforts in addressing issues related to women.
- To strengthen the national machinery, the National Council for Women and Family Development was formed at the state and parliamentary constituency levels to provide the link with the grassroots.
- In addition, the National Advisory Council on Women was restructured and the number of members are increased to provide wider representation for a better exchange of ideas and address issues related to women.
- To further improve the effectiveness of the national machinery, the Cabinet Committee on Gender Equality, chaired by the Prime Minister, was established in December 2004 to provide policy directions and monitor activities pertaining to women and family development. The Committee is also another avenue for the Ministry to highlight women's issues.
- Based on the mandate from the Cabinet Committee, Gender Focal Points (GFPs) were appointed in 2005 to act as focal point/liaison officers for gender related matters at their ministries. To date, 39 GFPs have been appointed. To equip the GFPs in dealing with gender issues, the Ministry has conducted gender sensitisation training including training on CEDAW and gender budgeting.
- Taking cognisance of the important role of NGOs in complementing government efforts for the benefit of women, an allocation of 56.7 million ringgit (USD 15.3 million) was disbursed to 550 NGOs and Councils for Women and Family Development to implement activities and programmes for the advancement of women and their families.

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MWFCD

- The significant role played by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD) and the Department of Women's Development (DWD) is reflected through the increase in financial and human resources.
- For example, the number of personnel in the Ministry has increased from 67 in 2001 to 246 in 2006.
- Likewise, the operating budget has also increased for the Ministry from USD\$1.1 million in 2001 to USD\$20.2 million in 2006.

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DWD

- As for the Department of Women's Development, the number of personnel has increased from 41 in 2001 to 153 in 2006.
- Similarly, the operating budget has also increased from USD\$507,833 in 2001 to USD\$8.5 million in 2006.

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Development budget

- Under the Eighth Malaysia Plan, the Ministry and Department of Women's Development (DWD) received a development budget of USD\$10.2 million and USD\$611,111 respectively for the period of 2001 to 2005.
- The development allocation budget has significantly increased in the Ninth Malaysia Plan in which the Ministry has been allocated USD\$13.0 million while DWD receives USD\$2.3 million.
- Taking into account all agencies under the purview of the Ministry (i.e., National Population and Family Development Board and Department of Social Welfare), the total development budget allocated to the Ministry has increased by 114 per cent from USD\$71.8 million under the Eighth Malaysia Plan to USD\$153.3 under the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

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Gender Responsive Budget (Characteristics)

- Recognizing that the budget is probably the most important (single) instrument of any government to effect policies, the Government has initiated a pilot project of Gender Responsive Budget in 2002 to mainstream gender within the government budgeting system.
- Malaysia has a well-developed budgeting system focusing on long-term planning and budgeting and this provides an enabling environment for us to implement a gender responsive budget.
- Through the Gender Responsive Budget, greater gender awareness will be brought into the policies and budgets of all ministries and agencies.

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GRB (Chronology)

- Gender budgeting in Malaysia had its beginnings in 2000 when the then Prime Minister spoke about gender budget work in his address to the Meeting of the Regional Steering Committee of Rural Women in the Asia Pacific.

- Following that, the MWFCDC organised introductory workshops for Ministry's officials as well as officials of relevant central agencies.
- A pilot project was initiated which involved four ministries (i.e., Education, Human Resources, Rural Development and Health). In March 2004, the Ministry of Higher Education became part of the pilot ministries.

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GRB (Progress)

- A series of training have been conducted for officers of the pilot ministries and central agencies as well as budget review officers in the Ministry of Finance.
- To ensure the sustainability of the project, training of trainers has also been conducted to provide a pool of trainers within the pilot ministries.

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GRB (Achievements to date)

- Treasury Call Circular No. 10 was issued in 2004 to direct all pilot ministries to incorporate gender budget analysis in their operating budget submission for the year 2006-2007. Other ministries/agencies are encouraged to follow suit.
- A manual on gender budgeting was produced to serve as a guideline for officers in pilot ministries as well as other ministries, particularly those who are involved with policy formulation and budget planning in doing gender budget analysis.
- A popular report was also produced to increase the awareness of the public at large regarding a gender responsive budget.

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- Madame Chairperson, distinguished members of the CEDAW Committee, over the last 10 years the status of Malaysian women has improved. However, much more needs to be done.
- There are numerous challenges faced by Malaysian women that need to be addressed. The challenges include:
 - i) Poverty Among Female Headed Households;
 - ii) Violence Against Women;
 - iii) HIV/AIDS & STDs;
 - iv) Effectiveness of Gender Mainstreaming Strategies;

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- v) Attitudinal Changes – Capacity Building;
- vii) Low participation of women in the labour force; and

- vii) Slow progress of women's participation in business and entrepreneurial activities.

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- Madame Chair, the government will do its utmost to address these challenges. These challenges will be addressed in the Ninth Malaysia Plan through the following thrusts:

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- i) Reducing incidence of poverty and improving quality of life;
- ii) Eliminating violence against women;
- iii) Improving further the health status and well-being of women;
- iv) Improving further the health status and well-being of women;

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- iv) Strengthening national machinery and institutional capacity;
- v) Reviewing laws and regulations to promote the status of women;
- vi) Advancing issues pertaining to women at the international level;

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- vii) Promoting greater female participation in the labour force;
- viii) Increasing education and training opportunities for women; and
- ix) Enhancing women's participation in business and entrepreneurial activities.

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Reducing poverty

- In addressing the incidence of poverty among women including urban poverty, the government will intensify the implementation of various programmes such as skills enhancement courses for single mothers to facilitate their involvement in income generating activities.
- Private companies will be encouraged to provide financial support for the education of the children of single mothers through the fostering children programme.

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Eliminating violence against women

- Towards eliminating cases of violence against women, awareness and training programmes relating to understanding gender roles and expectations, preventing

- abuse and violence, resolving conflicts and maintaining family harmony will continuously be implemented with the cooperation of NGOs and civil society.
- In addition to the existing government's institutions, shelter facilities for victims of violence will be established at five *Rumah Nur* (women centres). Various laws will be reviewed to ensure the safety and well-being of women such as the Penal Code and Domestic Violence Act.
 - Gender sensitisation courses will continue to be implemented for agencies involved in the handling and management of domestic violence cases. Standard operating procedures will be developed for the use of agencies to ensure greater coordination and effectiveness in the handling of such cases.

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Improving health status (1)

- Various programmes to promote the health status and well-being of women will continue to be undertaken such as the wellness programmes and mobile clinics.
- Realising the vulnerability of women, especially of young women, to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, concerted efforts will be undertaken to increase awareness and educate women on these diseases. The programme on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV as well as the provision of care and support for those infected, including counselling will be intensified.
- With regard to treatment, care and support, currently there are more than 250 clinics participating as an entry point to HIV/AIDS treatment and care.

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Improving health status (2)

- To ensure consistency and quality in implementing HIV/AIDS treatment and preventive programmes, education on sexuality, living skills and behaviour change programmes will be intensified.
- To provide a comprehensive and integrated health care for women and children, a special hospital will be established to serve as the national referral centre for the health and well-being of women and children as well as undertake research on illnesses confronting them.

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The National Machinery

- The national machinery and other institutional mechanisms will be further strengthened during the Ninth Malaysia Plan. In this regard, gender mainstreaming programmes will continue to be intensified and to ensure its effectiveness, men will also be involved in the implementation of programmes and projects such as awareness campaigns on violence against women and gender sensitization programmes.
- Greater efforts will also be undertaken to ensure the systematic collection and compilation of sex-disaggregated data. The newly formed GFPs among others are tasked to facilitate the MWFCD in collecting the data.

- The MWFCDC has also developed a Malaysian Gender Gap Index (MGGI) to provide an indication of the status of gender disparity in the country.

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- Training will be provided to the women and family development councils to enhance their capacity in programme formulation and implementation as well as resolving issues confronting women at the grassroots level.
- Financial support will continue to be provided to NGOs to implement programmes that directly benefit women and improve their quality of life.
- The government will continue to increase awareness in both the public and private sectors on the implementation of CEDAW. The members of the Inter-Agency Committee for the implementation and monitoring of CEDAW will be continuously trained to undertake sectoral analysis of gender issues and to provide regular reporting on CEDAW.

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Reviewing laws and regulations

- Civil and *syariah* laws are being reviewed to safeguard and protect the rights of women.
- Employment related acts will be reviewed to include provisions that prohibit all forms of sexual harassment.
- Measures will also continue to be undertaken to improve enforcement and speedy implementation of court decisions on family matters.
- To further ensure the protection and welfare of women, the private sector will be encouraged to review the collective agreements that could be deemed to be discriminating women.

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International Level

- The government of Malaysia is committed in advancing the status of women not only at the national level but also at the international level. This is reflected through the commitment of the government to establish Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Institute for the Empowerment of Women (NIEW) in Kuala Lumpur.
- This centre will undertake various programmes including capacity building, exchange of ideas and information and research and development, as well as work closely with international organisations and institutions on issues related to women's advancement.

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Promoting female participation in the labour force

- As mentioned earlier, the female labour force participation rate is still low compared to men. Thus, the government will continue to encourage greater

female participation in the labour market through the provision of more conducive working arrangement that takes into account the multiple roles and responsibilities of women. Measures to be undertaken by the government will include the establishment of community childcare centres and more family-friendly workplace practices.

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- Taking into consideration that greater female participation in the labour market requires a work-life balance, the government will introduce new and flexible working arrangements. Hence, under the Ninth Malaysia Plan, various measures will be taken to enhance the implementation of teleworking, part-time work, home office concept of employment/business, and retraining opportunities to enable women to re-enter the labour market.
- Since an increasing number of women are involved in the informal sector, measures will be undertaken to provide better access to adequate social protection in facing lifecycle events such as sickness, invalidity and old age as well as employment risks.

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Increasing education and training opportunities

- In view of the rapid changes in technology, training and retraining opportunities in science and technology, including formal and informal training in ICT, will be enhanced. The private sector will also be encouraged to provide skills training and retraining opportunities for women, including in emerging technologies.
- In addressing the low enrolment of women in science and engineering as well as in technical and vocational fields at the tertiary level, career guidance programmes will be implemented at the primary level to instil greater awareness among female students and their parents regarding opportunities in professional and technical fields.
- Counseling and information will be provided to female students to encourage them to pursue technical and vocational subjects.
- In addition, increased training opportunities will be provided in community colleges and skills training institutions for female students who dropped out of formal schooling.

SLIDE 74

Enhancing participation of women in business and entrepreneurial activities

- To enhance the participation of women in business and entrepreneurial activities, measures will be taken to consolidate and integrate financial assistance and training programmes.
- A special window will be created in existing financial programmes to enable more women to obtain loans.
- More opportunities will be provided for women to be involved in agro-based industries and businesses.

- Women entrepreneurs will also be encouraged to network with other successful organisations both locally and globally.

SLIDE 75

(No notes)

SLIDE 76

Reservations on CEDAW

- Although Malaysia became party to CEDAW with some reservations and declarations, we will continue to review such reservations with a view to lifting them. This would be done progressively and taking into consideration the constitutional provisions and national interest.

SLIDE 77

Concluding Remarks

- In conclusion, Madame Chair, women in Malaysia have made a significant advancement in various fields. Their rights and interests are progressively being safeguarded and protected as envisaged under CEDAW. This was made possible with the commitment of all sectors in the government, private sector and the community at large.
- On that note, I would like to thank the Committee for your attention and we look forward to exchanging ideas and views for the betterment of women in Malaysia.
- Thank you.

- End -