

OPENING REMARKS FROM  
YANG BERHORMAT DATUK LIEW VUI KEONG  
MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT (LAW)

19 February 2019

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(Salutations)

- His Excellency Dato' Mohamad Ariff Md Yusof,  
Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat;
  
- Yang Berhormat Puan Hannah Yeoh,  
Deputy Minister of Women, Family and Community Development;
  
- Yang Berhormat Tuan Shamsul Iskandar,  
Deputy Minister of Primary Industries and Chairman for CPA MALAYSIA;
  
- The Honourable Mr Richard Graham,  
MP and Chairman of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy;

Esteemed speakers:

- Her Excellency Mrs Vicki Treadell, British High Commissioner to Malaysia
  
- Yang Berhormat Puan Teo Nie Ching,  
Deputy Minister of Education
  
- Yang Berhormat Puan Jannie Lasimbang,

Assistant Minister of Law and Native Affairs, Sabah

- Yang Berhormat Puan Maria Chin Abdullah,  
MP for Petaling Jaya
  
- Yang Berhormat Puan Nurul Izzah Anwar,  
MP for Permatang Pauh
  
- Yang Berhormat Cik Kasthuri Patto,  
MP for Batu Kawan
  
- The Honourable Fozia Khalid of Pakistan
  
- Ms. Shannon O'Connell  
Senior Gender Advisor of WFD
  
- Mr Nejjib Jeridi,  
Country Representative of WFD Tunisia
  
- Ms Sophia Fernandes  
Commonwealth Programme Director, WFD
  
- Dr Vanessa Ogden of Mulberry School for Girls, UK
  
- Mrs Margaret Curran,  
former Minister of the UK

- Ms Dayang Shalbia binti Abdul Ghani  
Deputy Undersecretary, Policy and Strategic Planning Division  
Ministry for Women, Family and Community Development
- Mr Christopher Choong Weng Wai of Khazanah Research Institute
- Tan Sri Zarinah Anwar of 30% Club
- Ms Shanthi Dairiam of Women's Aid Organisation

Members of the media and quests;

Ladies & gentlemen.

It is an honour for me to be standing here and be a part of this conference as Malaysia recognises the importance of including women in the development of the country.

I have heard that yesterday and saw from the agenda that you had the chance to hear a variety of international and local perspectives on addressing the many challenges to achieving gender equality around the world and here in Malaysia.

I am really pleased to note that there are many participants here from my home state Sabah as in our State, we have a lot to share on our own work to progress women and girls.

Today, our international guests will have the opportunity to learn more about our own Malaysian context. We have much to share about our progress, our challenges and ways that we hope to work across sectors to enhance women's political leadership.

It is really important that women and men from across sectors take seriously the need for women's voices to be heard in policy making, in law making and in decision making.

In Malaysia, women's participation in policy making is crucial and they have stamped their mark in the Federal Cabinet and Parliament. Women in political positions and holding office are gaining momentum and have made positive impact to the country. Of course, the number of women representation in the Cabinet and Parliament is still low, but with the Pakatan Harapan led government for a New Malaysia, there has been an increase in numbers due to the leadership's recognition for more women leaders to give hope to women and girls in the country.

Currently, there are 5 Ministers and 4 Deputy Ministers appointed among women in the Federal Cabinet. Not to mention the current government has appointed Malaysia's first woman, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, to become the nation's number 2 leader. The women members of the Cabinet were not simply to ensure adequate representation among women, but they were appointed because they have merit and Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has confidence in their contribution to the country. Surely, women representation will rise in the future for their worth and as equal with men, and this will further bring hope and respect to Malaysian women and girls in general.

Parliament has also seen the number of women representation, which is proof of the people's support for more women leaders. Previously, women representation in the Dewan Rakyat stood at 8 percent, but the percentage has now risen to 14.4 percent with 32 women Members of Parliament. While in the Dewan Negara, the number shot from 17 percent to 19.4 percent with 13 women Senators out of a total of 68.

The government has assured that it is determined to reach at least 30 percent of women policy makers. However, the government needs the support from all parties to ensure more women will come forward to voice out what is best for the people.

With that said, Malaysia abhors all discrimination against women and girls. In order for women and girls to reach their fullest potential, it is vital to address their specific needs, including social protection. One, in particular, that guarantees uneasiness and anxiety among women is the act of stalking by another, generally, men. This is something that the government has given much thought, even after receiving calls to make the act of stalking an offence that is punishable by law.

This conference is most apt for me to announce that the government will be tabling a Law on Stalking during Parliamentary sitting in July. The government feels concerned of the safety of the people, men and women and boys and girls alike, due to the act of stalking by another. Regardless of who we are, government or not, we are deeply disturbed by individuals being abused and sometimes leading to unwarranted deaths. Some in the most gruesome manner. Perhaps it all started with the act of stalking. So, we must draw that line for the would-be stalkers before it's too late. I hope the Bill on Stalking will

be passed in Parliament and help the government make Malaysia a safer place for the people.

In that respect, input from women is most crucial to ensure success and effectiveness of this law. The government views women's role in the development of the community as important and impactful. Therefore, the government highly appreciates the contribution by women in making Malaysia safe and progressive.

I am delighted that organisations such as the Commonwealth Partnership for Democracy or CP4D continue to work tirelessly in uplifting the lives of women. The knowledge you bring to us not only benefits and encourages Malaysian women to be more vocal in exercising democracy as citizens of this country, but provides much knowledge for the government's perusal in formulating laws and policies for the betterment of the people.

To that end, I would like to thank the Parliament of Malaysia, CPA Malaysia and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, who, under the CP4D, have put together this event.

The British High Commission have been instrumental in Malaysia in this area of work and in ensuring that we are all here today. I extend my thanks to Mrs Vicki Treadell, the British High Commissioner to Malaysia, and her team for an outstanding job and cooperation.

On that note, I end my speech with my deepest thanks and hope you have a fruitful and engaging conference.

-end.

