

- 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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(No notes)

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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.

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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(No notes)

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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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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:

- 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.

- 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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- 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

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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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(No notes)

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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.

- Following that, the MWFCDC organised introductory workshops for Ministry's officials as well as officials of relevant central agencies.

- 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;

SLIDE 61

- 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

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 t, will dcknes inclheir O cknesregardes for women, incld v befenrothe tc O Tw (ties) Tj Enr9811.2Tj

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

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(No notes)

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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.

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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 -