



Malaysia

Permanent Mission to the United Nations

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STATEMENT BY MS. ZURAINI ABU BAKAR ON AGENDA ITEM 3 (a)(i): THE EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN AND THEIR ROLE IN POVERTY AND HUNGER ERADICATION, DEVELOPMENT AND CURRENT CHALLENGES, IN THE 54TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, NEW YORK, 20 FEBRUARY 2012

Madam Chair,

1. My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by Algeria on behalf of Group G77 and China. We would also like to express our appreciation for the organisation of the High Level Round Table and the expert panel discussions which have clearly framed the agenda of rural women.

Madam Chair,

2. For many generations, women have played a pivotal role in poverty and hunger eradication in the rural areas. Their multiple roles in economic activities and managing household economic resources are crucial in improving the household's economic status. The importance of rural women was even recognised in the 2010 Universal Level Plenary Meeting on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) where Member States had highlighted rural women as essential agents of change and fundamental to food security and rural development. However, the contribution of rural women does not commensurate with their share in land ownership and access to productive resources.

3. Women own only two percent of the land and receive one percent agricultural credit. In addition, only five percent of agricultural extension resources are directed to women. Projects aiming to eradicate poverty, more often than not, view the poor rural women as only recipients of development projects and not as participants.

4. To address the challenges faced by women in rural areas, it is imperative for us to begin recognizing rural women as potential human capital who can contribute significantly to national economic growth and development. This is providing an enabling environment for rural women to realise their full potential and importance.

Madam Chair,

5. Through the years, agriculture sector has helped Malaysia in reducing incidence of poverty from 49.3 percent in 1970 to 16.9 percent in 2010. This is an important milestone



poverty was eradicated at the end of 2010. This significant achievement had enabled Malaysia to achieve the target of MDG 1 before 2015.

Madam Chair,

6. In Malaysia, the Government views rural women as potential human capital. Hence, the empowerment and well being of rural women are of a great concern to the Government. In this regard, various measures have been taken to ensure rural women enjoy equal opportunities in which their concerns and needs are integrated and mainstreamed. In recognition of women's contribution in developing settlement land under the Special and Core Zone, The Land (Group Settlement Areas) Act was amended to allow wives and ex-wives for joint ownership with the husbands of the developed land. Prior to the amendment, only the husbands were entitled to ownership.

7. In enhancing economic empowerment of rural women, financial assistance are provided by financial institutions such as Agro Bank, GAGI Bank and the Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (a model based on the Grameen Bank). In addition, entrepreneurial development training is also being provided. A special entrepreneurship programme for women was introduced in 2009 for Low-income Households with the aim to train and build a focus on women entrepreneurs by the end of 2012.

8. In addition, to equip rural women with IT-based knowledge and to encourage them to utilise their abilities, various computerised demonstration centres (RiKIDS) were established throughout the country.

Madam Chair,

9. Eliminating violence against women is one of the priorities of the Government. Hence, the Domestic Violence Act 1989 was amended and passed by the Parliament in December 2011, with the new amendments, emotional and psychological injuries are defined as domestic violence and claims can be filed by victims for compensation for emotional and psychological injuries.

10. In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate that Malaysia strongly believes that investing in women is smart economics and a full recognition of women's role in rural development would greatly contribute to poverty reduction and rural prosperity and ultimately, would help towards sustainable development.

11. Hence, Malaysia remains committed to the full realisation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, CEDAW and the Millennium Development Goals. My delegation looks forward to contributing meaningfully towards discussions for the 58th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

I thank you Madam Chair.