

By : **DATO' SRI MOHD NAJIB BIN TUN HAJI ABDUL RAZAK
PERDANA MENTERI MALAYSIA**

Venue : **KLCC**

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Title : **3RD GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN DELIVER 2013**

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim Assalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh, Salam Sejahtera dan Salam 1Malaysia And a Very Good Morning

H.E. Maria da Luz Dai Guebuza, First Lady of Mozambique

H.E. Sia Koroma, First Lady of Sierra Leone

H.E. Dr. Christine M. Kaseba-Sata, First Lady of Zambia

YB Datuk Rohani Abdul Karim, Minister of Women, Family and Community Development

Jill Sheffield, President, Women Deliver

YBhg. Datuk Dr. Raj Abdul Karim, Director, Women Deliver Asia

H.E. Rachel Ruto, Wife of the Deputy President of Kenya

HRH Crown Princess Mette Marit of Norway, UN Goodwill Ambassador, HIV AIDS

HRH Crown Princess Mary of Denmark

HRH Princess Mabel Van Oranje of the Netherlands

The Hon. Cabinet Ministers

HE Ambassadors

Ms Helen Clark, Head UNDP

Your Excellencies Heads of UN Agencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. It is with great pleasure that I welcome all of you to Kuala Lumpur and to the 3rd Women Deliver Global Conference 2013.

2. As I look around this hall, I see faces from all corners of the globe. I see royalty and first ladies, heads of UN agencies, foundations and corporations; professionals and the civil society, all sharing the same hopes and aspirations. I understand that you represent more than 150 countries. And I speak on behalf of all Malaysians when I say: we are honoured to have this global village in our midst for the next few days.

3. I wish to thank Ms Sheffield for the kind introduction. This conference is the culmination of much hard work, passion by you and your team. We are honored that you have chosen Kuala Lumpur as the venue for this, the largest conference of its kind this decade. I thank you for bringing the advocates, experts, ministers, and delegates here today.

4. Togetherness is strength. Together, your strong voices will help frame the solutions, policies and strategies that will ensure progress for girls and women; of our nation, our region, and our world.

Ladies and Gentlemen

5. We know that women play an indispensable role at every level of society, from our families and communities, our schools and workplace, to our government and our economy. We see it in our own nation, where investment in education has empowered women to occupy top positions: in the civil service, in business and even in politics.

6. I have been fortunate to work with some of them. The governor of our central bank, Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz, a world-renowned economist and a guardian of Malaysia's enviable economic record. Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, our former First Lady, who has done so much to improve maternal, public and mental health for women - not just here in Malaysia, but also in our region and the world. And Chew Hoong Ling, a young woman who has already lived more lives than most of us: as a radio deejay, an organ donation advocate, a voluntary sector leader and a candidate for MP, and an unbeatable advocate for women's rights.

7. Such successes show our country in its best light. But I know that a few superstar players do not mean that the field is level. We have taken clear steps towards a more equitable nation: in education, in healthcare and in wage equality. But there is still much more to be done. Last year's World Economic Forum report puts us in the bottom quarter of the gender gap index. We have been improving, but perhaps others have been improving faster.

8. As we strive to become a developed nation by the end of the decade, our challenge is to ensure that our economic growth is truly inclusive; that the opportunities we create are open to all, and that all Malaysians feel able to take them. If Malaysia's development is to be sustainable, it must afford women the same rights, respect and opportunities as men.

9. This will not happen from the top-down: change must come in the workplace, in the villages, in the minds of all Malaysians. But as politicians, we have a special responsibility. I have just formed a new cabinet, and welcomed a new Minister of Women, Family and Community Development, Datuk Rohani Abdul Karim. I look forward to working with her, and with the rest of the Cabinet, to make up lost time and close the gender gap.

10. As a young, fast-developing Asian nation, I believe our story can set a marker for twenty-first century gender relations. We have many different faces; from traditional community structures to the modern city lifestyles here in Kuala Lumpur. Our task now is to ensure they all face towards a more equal future. As we do, we must learn from those who have gone before us, and pass our lessons on to those who follow. So before the rest of the program gets underway, I would like to say a little more about our successes, and the challenges still to come.

Ladies and Gentlemen

11. I would like to focus on two in particular. They are the prerequisites for individual success, and the most pressing problem facing policymakers in the developing world: health, and education. And for each, I believe we have a compelling story to tell.

12. Malaysia has made great progress in improving maternal health care and services for our girls and women. Today, we have one of the lowest maternal mortality ratios in the region at 29 per 100,000 live births in 2011 against 540 per 100,000 just after independence. Thanks to strategic, focused and targeted interventions, thousands of women and children in Malaysia are able to survive and enjoy a good quality of life.

13. Political will and stable policies, investment in health and a commitment to improve quality of care; these are some of the essential ingredients of our success. It is also our hope that Malaysia's experience proves useful in the wider fight to reduce the risks of pregnancy and childbirth.

14. I am pleased that our progress has been shared with the international community. In the developing world, national progress has been uneven, with some regions or states falling behind others. Disparities between the rich and the poor continue to be reflected in the high maternal mortality, which is an indicator of inadequate and inequitable allocation of resources. It is my hope that countries still lagging behind in meeting the 5th Millennium Development Goal will be able to learn from our experience. We stand ready to provide technical support to countries with persistently high maternal mortality.

15. Countries can and will be able to reduce deaths and disability of mothers and their newborns. Women and girls must get the care they need and rightly deserve. The advent of new technologies and treatment to handle pregnancy and delivery complications bring renewed hope. Interventions to save women's lives have become more widely affordable, even in the poorest countries.

16. One such intervention is family planning. The new Millennium Development Goal to provide universal access reproductive health services is a basic human right which should not be denied. We must make these life-saving interventions available, even and especially where cultural differences make access even more difficult.

17. Health advocates and experts must be ready to engage in dialogue with faith leaders to dispel negative perceptions. Girls and women must be empowered to make informed choices; to take personal responsibility for their health, within a social fabric that encourages it. Teenage pregnancies, abandoned babies, early marriage, and sexually transmitted infections must be addressed without stigma or discrimination. This will sometimes require a change in

mindset; a willingness to look again at our approach, to ask ourselves whether we are doing all we can to put girls and women's health first.

18. It is here that the importance of education becomes clear. We know that educating our girls will yield positive gains in their health and wellbeing. We know it will further lower maternal mortality and morbidity rates, as well as birth rates. And we know it will also help halt the spread of diseases including HIV and AIDS. And we know it will improve child health and nutrition.

19. Investing in universal education without gender discrimination has yielded results beyond expectations. A girl at school in Malaysia today is more likely to go to university than her male classmates. Although we have the same number of girls and boys enrolled in primary school, higher education rates are greater for women. Today 65 per cent of students enrolled in tertiary education in Malaysia are women. Consider the achievements in the light of what happened to Malala Yusuf in her pursuit for education.

20. These are real achievements. But enrolment is only one part of the story. For Malaysia, as for many countries, the challenge is to ensure that success in the classroom carries over into life beyond and outside it; that the world of opportunity for girls and women does not narrow upon graduation, but opens up.

21. Women are still not equally represented in the labor force. The Malaysian economy saw exceptional growth at 5.6 per cent last year. But female labor force participation currently at 47 per cent must be improved if we want to continue to see robust and sustainable growth. More jobs aligned to women's needs should be offered to encourage their participation in the workforce, such as through home-based, part-time or flexible working hours.

22. We have policies to encourage this shift, with reforms under the Economic Transformation Programme that reinforce the need to attract, increase and retain female employees in the workforce. We have several overarching targets for women in the workforce, such as increasing female labour participation rate to 55 per cent, and increasing the number of women working on publicly listed company boards to 30 per cent. The National Institute for the Empowerment of Women runs a Women Directors training programme to realise this target. To date, more than 300 women have been trained and are ready to take up positions on corporate boards.

23. We are supporting skills programmes and entrepreneurship opportunities for low-income earners. And we are looking to build a holistic social support system, to contribute to work-life balance, offering childcare and elder care solutions, among others. These policies are not merely add-ons, they are essential precursors to genuinely sustainable economic growth.

24. Furthermore, if we want to see equally sustainable democracy, it is clear that we increase women's political participation. I am encouraged by the active and visible role taken by some women in our national politics. But I believe it is incumbent upon us to find out why women are under represented in Malaysia's political discourse.

Ladies and gentlemen,

25. Perhaps it is a little late, but I should point out that the previous Women's Minister is standing before you. And I am honoured to be here today in the company of those who have worked so hard to prioritize girls and women in national and international agendas.

26. With my re-election come new and increased commitments to empower women and girls as we drive our nation's development forward. Every girl and woman in Malaysia, regardless of her religion, political affiliation, social status or location, deserves a safe, healthy and prosperous life. Our national, regional, and global stability depend on it.

27. You are all part of an international call to action, a push to create a world where the health and wellbeing of girls and women are priorities, not afterthoughts. On behalf of the government and people of Malaysia, I assure you of our commitment to this shared ambition.

28. We know that investing in girls and women – investment in their education, health, safety, rights, and financial independence – not only pays but is also smart investment. The evidence, from developed and developing nations alike, is clear. When our girls and women are educated, when they are healthy, when they are independent, the benefits extend beyond individual freedom to prosper and achieve. Freed from the unnatural constraint of inequality, women can realize their potential as active participants in the community and in the world.

29. We have come a long way, but there remains a long way to go. As the international community comes together here in Kuala Lumpur, the vibrant lighting of the KL tower signifies our global responsibility, and our resolve to create a brighter future for all our citizens. The world is watching us. Now is the time to deliver for girls and women.

30. I Thank you.