

## GLOBAL LEADERS MEETING ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: A COMMITMENT TO ACTION

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Mr Chairman,

1. I am delighted to be here for this meeting - the first time at the United Nations that commitments to women and girls have been made at the Head of Government level.
2. Malaysia has always stood by our support for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action that 189 countries signed in 1995. More than that, however, Malaysia has a long tradition of empowering women, and my government has fully incorporated that aim into our policies.
3. We do this not just because it is right - which it is. Recognising the dignity of every human being means ensuring that all, men and women, are granted every opportunity to fulfil their potential. If barriers are placed in the way solely of women, then those barriers must fall.
4. But especially in developing countries, if we wish to achieve our national potential it makes no sense to restrict the talent and energy of women. In Malaysia, we aim to achieve high income nation status by 2020. We cannot do that without women being equal partners and drivers of the growth we need to bring prosperity to all our citizens.

5. Our record is plain to see. “Upholding the Role of Women” was one of the main strategies in our last budget. It contained plans to improve access to the job market for all women: from skills-training for housewives and entrepreneurship opportunities for single mothers; to training programmes for high level professionals, and making it easier for child care centres to be set up in the private sector.
  
6. Under our most recent economic blueprint, the Eleventh Malaysia Plan, we have set a target of increasing the female labour participation rate from 54 percent, as of last year, to 59 percent by 2020.
  
7. To provide opportunities for women to return to work after having children, our Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, together with Talent Corporation Malaysia, have launched a Career Comeback Programme. This initiative will be continued and expanded to increase the number of talented women returning to the workforce.
  
8. This May we launched the Malaysian chapter of the 30 Percent Club, to help achieve our goal of women making up at least 30 percent of managerial and decision-making posts in the public and private sectors by 2016.
  
9. To aid this, we have also set up a Women Directors Programme - and 900 have already graduated and are officially “board ready”.
  
10. To boost our efforts in the formulation of policies and legislation specific to women, we have just established a Women’s Advisory and Consultative Council. This will play an important role in line with our National Policy on Women and the Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women.

11. The council will act as a think tank, monitoring and appraising the efficiency and effectiveness of government policies and programmes related to women.
  
12. And as we aware that single mothers and female-headed households are often socially and economically disadvantaged, particularly in rural areas, my government is going to launch a National Action Plan to Empower Single Mothers next month.
  
13. Women have made many strides forward in Malaysia. We know that they are key to our future - indeed, close to 70 percent of students at our public universities are women.
  
14. We will do all we can to enable them to play their full part in every aspect of our country's life. Because we know that when women succeed, we all succeed.

Thank you

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