

**SPEECH BY
DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE 11TH ANNUAL CHARITY BALL OF THE INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION
AT SHANGRILA HOTEL
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It is indeed a great pleasure to be present here for the Kuala Lumpur International Women's Association annual charity ball. My wife and I are not strangers to the association which has so graciously invited us for its annual dinner in previous years.

2. We are glad to see many familiar faces again tonight. Once again, all of you have tirelessly worked to ensure the success of this charitable event. Once again, you have shown how different people of different cultures can work together for the common good of man.

3. The International Women's Association of Kuala Lumpur is now eleven years old and its membership now stands at 380 women representing 55 nationalities. In itself, this association is a mini united nations comprising the better halves of many diplomats and expatriates.

4. The association has taken it upon itself to encourage women of different nationalities and cultures to work together for the larger good of society by raising funds for various charities.

5. This noble aim was born out of a desire to contribute to the society which they live in. It is a laudable effort which has complemented other efforts towards caring for the less fortunate in our society.

6. The government itself embarked on a campaign to create a more caring society in Malaysia. This effort needs the participation of every Malaysian to ensure that we do not become a cold, uncaring people desirous only of selfish personal gains.

7. We are fortunate in Malaysia that we have a people who are resolute in ensuring that the less fortunate of society are not discarded but instead aided and assisted to make an overall happier society. This is evident from the generous response of Malaysians to causes such as raising funds for medical treatments, schooling and caring for the elderly.

8. Their generosity extends to others in the region and world who have not been so lucky. We can see from the overwhelming response Malaysians have given to funds for the Palestinian people, those affected by the North Korean famine and the Bosnian people.

9. Efforts such as those by the International Women's Association contribute to the creating of a caring Malaysian society. Further, the spirit of cooperation amongst members of various nationalities is reflective of the spirit of togetherness which Malaysians have come to symbolise.

10. There cannot be enough times that Malaysians pray with thanks that despite the varied mix of ethnic groups in Malaysia, we have sought to emphasise on our similarities rather than our differences.

11. The spirit of give-and-take and the inter-racial cooperation amongst the country's ethnic groups has made Malaysia what it is today - a nation whose people live in peace and harmony.

12. We place the highest premium on our ability to work together and to live together as one Malaysian family despite our racial and religious differences.

13. It is this singularity in our national psyche that sees people of different groups donating generously to charity, no matter what their race, color or creed.

Ladies and gentlemen,

14. Although we are a young nation, we have come very far. But our greatest achievement has been our ability to live together as one family. We have seen how in many countries ethnic and religious difference erupt in conflicts which destroy a country.

15. The resulting peace and stability have allowed our people to pursue a path of growth and prosperity.

16. What we take from society, we have to repay. A society which is bereft of the environment of peace and stability or where the less fortunate are ignored will eventually end up being a much poorer society.

17. A society which does not care for the less fortunate can only decay and ultimately, disintegrate.

18. Therefore, I would like to congratulate the international women's association for playing an important role in contributing to the society they live in. It is my wish that other ngos emulate the association in such efforts.

19. I am confident that under the patronage of Y.Bhg. Datin Seri Sharifah Aziah, you will continue with your contributions to society.

20. Once again, I would like to thank you for having invited my wife and I to the annual charity ball of the international women's association. I wish everyone a pleasant evening.

Thank you.