

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY
THE HON. DATO' SERI ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI
AT THE N.A.M. MINISTERIAL MEETING ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
AT PICC, PUTRAJAYA
9 MAY 2005**

ASSALAMUALAIKUM WARAHMATULLAHI WABARAKATUH AND GOOD MORNING,

EXCELLENCIES;

DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES;

MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS;

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

1. ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF MALAYSIA, I BID YOU A WARM WELCOME TO MALAYSIA AND TO THIS MINISTERIAL MEETING ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT. AS CHAIRMAN OF N.A.M., MALAYSIA IS HONOURED TO HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY AND MANDATE TO HOST THIS IMPORTANT MEETING. I WISH TO THANK YOUR GOVERNMENTS FOR THEIR POSITIVE RESPONSE TO MALAYSIA'S INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS MEETING.

2. YOUR PRESENCE HERE TODAY IS CLEAR TESTIMONY OF YOUR COUNTRIES' STRONG COMMITMENTS TOWARDS ACHIEVING GENDER JUSTICE, EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE IN THE WORLD. YOUR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION IN THE DELIBERATIONS WILL ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF THIS MEETING, AND WILL FURTHER STRENGTHEN OUR COLLECTIVE RESOLVE TO ACT TOGETHER, IN THE INTERESTS OF THE MOVEMENT.

3. THIS MEETING IS HELD AT A CRITICAL JUNCTURE IN THE HISTORY OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT, AT A TIME WHEN IT IS TAKING STEPS TO REVITALISE ITSELF. IN AN EFFORT TO ENSURE ITS CONTINUED RELEVANCE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD, THE MOVEMENT HAS TAKEN ONE MORE STEP FORWARD BY TAKING UP AN ISSUE OF IMPORTANCE TO MORE THAN HALF OF THE POPULATION OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD. BY HOSTING THIS MINISTERIAL MEETING ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN, MALAYSIA, AS CHAIRMAN OF N.A.M., IS MAKING AN EFFORT TO ORIENTATE THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF OUR TIMES, WHILE NOT ABANDONING ITS TRADITIONAL CONCERN WITH POLITICAL AND SECURITY ISSUES.

4. THIS INITIATIVE IS VERY MUCH IN LINE WITH THE "KUALA LUMPUR DECLARATION ON CONTINUING THE REVITALISATION OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT", ADOPTED AT THE THIRTEENTH N.A.M. SUMMIT. THAT DECLARATION, AMONG OTHERS, NOT ONLY RECOGNISED THE NEED FOR THE MOVEMENT TO

RESPOND TO THE NEW CHALLENGES POSED BY GLOBALISATION IN WAYS THAT WILL ENSURE ITS CONTINUED RELEVANCE TO MEMBERS, BUT ALSO SOUGHT TO "ENSURE THAT GLOBALISATION SHOULD LEAD TO THE PROSPERING AND EMPOWERING OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, NOT THEIR CONTINUED IMPOVERISHMENT AND DEPENDENCE ON THE WEALTHY AND DEVELOPED WORLD".

5. THEREFORE, THE ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED UNDER THE THEME "EMPOWERING WOMEN IN FACING THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALISATION" ARE VERY PERTINENT AND OF CRITICAL CONCERN TO N.A.M. MEMBER STATES. N.A.M. RECOGNISES THAT WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT, ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN ALL SPHERES OF DEVELOPMENT ARE VITALLY IMPORTANT IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION IN N.A.M. COUNTRIES.

6. I BELIEVE THAT THE OUTCOME OF THIS N.A.M. MINISTERIAL MEETING IN PUTRAJAYA WOULD HAVE A DIRECT IMPACT ON THE HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS OF HALF OF THE POPULATION OF MEMBER STATES, THE MAJORITY OF WHOM NEED SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE TO REMEDY THE IMBALANCES AND INJUSTICES EXISTING IN THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SPHERES. INDEED, IN MY VIEW, THE MOVEMENT'S STRUGGLE WILL NOT BE COMPLETE OR MEANINGFUL IF IT IS UNABLE TO TOUCH THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF ALL OF ITS CITIZENS, YOUNG AND OLD, WOMEN AND MEN.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

7. TODAY, WE ARE GATHERED HERE TO SHARE EXPERIENCES, DEVELOP INSIGHTS AND GENERATE IDEAS TOWARDS ENHANCING AND EMPOWERING WOMEN, IN OUR DESIRE TO ATTAIN THE GOAL OF CREATING A MORE JUST AND SECURE WORLD FOR BOTH WOMEN AND MEN. THIS WILL NOT BE AN EASY TASK AS CURRENT TRENDS IN THE WORLD ECONOMY CONTINUALLY PRESENT MANY CHALLENGES TO THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GENDER JUSTICE AND EQUITY.

8. WHILE GLOBALISATION HAS PROVIDED NEW OPPORTUNITIES, EVIDENCE HAS SHOWN THAT IT HAS ALSO LED TO THE FURTHER IMPOVERISHMENT OF MILLIONS OF ALREADY POOR PEOPLE, WOMEN IN PARTICULAR. I WOULD LIKE TO POINT OUT THAT, AS A RESULT OF GREATER INTERNATIONALISATION OF BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT, WOMEN NOW HAVE MORE ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN MANY COUNTRIES. HOWEVER, THE MAJORITY OF THEM – DUE TO LOW LEVELS OF EDUCATION, LACK OF SKILLS AND INADEQUATE RESOURCES – STILL SUFFER FROM INCREASED POVERTY, DETERIORATING WORK CONDITIONS AND JOB INSECURITY.

9. I BELIEVE THAT GLOBALISATION CAN BE A MEANS TO GREATER WELFARE AND IMPROVED STANDARDS OF LIVING IF IT IS WELL MANAGED AND IMPLEMENTED JUSTLY. UNFORTUNATELY, WHAT WE SEE TODAY IS A WORLD WHERE ECONOMIC PROGRESS IS ATTAINED, BUT OFTEN AT THE EXPENSE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND BALANCED, EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT. THIS IS BECAUSE THE RULES FACILITATING

THE EXPANSION OF GLOBAL MARKETS PRIMARILY FOCUS ON ECONOMIC, AND NOT SOCIAL, GAINS. FURTHERMORE, THE FRUITS OF GLOBALISATION ARE OFTEN TILTED IN FAVOUR OF THE POWERFUL AND WEALTHY AND NOT ENOUGH TO THE POOR AND IMPOVERISHED.

10. ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT, PERVASIVE POVERTY, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND NATURAL DISASTERS AS WELL AS POOR HEALTH CONDITIONS HAVE FURTHER MARGINALISED WOMEN AND EXACERBATED THEIR PROBLEMS. ON THE INTERNATIONAL FRONT, THE RECENT RISE OF GEO-POLITICAL INSTABILITIES AND REGIONAL CONFLICTS HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY DEVASTATING TO WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

11. IN THIS REGARD, N.A.M. IS DISMAYED BY THE STATE OF MILLIONS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN AROUND THE GLOBE WHO LIVE IN UNACCEPTABLE CONDITIONS DUE TO POVERTY, POOR HEALTH CIRCUMSTANCES, AS WELL AS WARS AND ARMED CONFLICTS. RECENT REPORTS MAKE FOR CHILLING AND TROUBLING READS. THE H.I.V./A.I.D.S. PANDEMIC, ONE OF THE LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH, IS THREATENING TO WIPE OUT DECADES OF INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. IN WAR-TORN AND ARMED CONFLICT COUNTRIES, MANY WOMEN AND CHILDREN HAVE BEEN RAPED, TORTURED, MAIMED AND HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO OTHER UNSPEAKABLE CRIMES. N.A.M. CONDEMNS IN STRONGEST TERMS THE USE OF RAPE AS A DELIBERATE WEAPON IN WARFARE. THE SPREAD OF THIS CALLOUS PRACTICE THAT DEGRADES AND DEHUMANISES WOMEN AND CHILDREN HAS NO JUSTIFICATION WHATSOEVER AND MUST NOT BE TOLERATED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. BESIDES THIS, THE RESURGENCE OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM, TERRORISM, AND EXCESSIVE MILITARISATION HAS ALSO EXACERBATED THE SITUATION, RESULTING IN THE REVERSAL OF THE GAINS MADE BY WOMEN OVER THE PAST FEW DECADES.

12. N.A.M. RECOGNISES THAT ISSUES FACING WOMEN IN THEIR EVERYDAY LIVES ARE NOT NECESSARILY NEW. YET, DUE TO THE COMBINED IMPACT OF THE FORCES OF GLOBALISATION, RECENT GEO-POLITICAL TRENDS, AS WELL AS INADEQUATE RESPONSES TO PARTICULAR DOMESTIC CHALLENGES, THE ISSUES AND PROBLEMS THAT WOMEN FACE HAVE TAKEN ON NEW DIMENSIONS AND COMPLEXITIES. THIS INCLUDES NEW FORMS OF STRUCTURAL AND SYSTEMIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. HENCE, NEW APPROACHES AND SOLUTIONS TO THE ISSUES AND PROBLEMS THAT WOMEN FACE ARE SORELY NEEDED.

13. FOR THE SAKE OF HUMANITY, N.A.M. MEMBER STATES MUST TAKE FIRM AND UNEQUIVOCAL STEPS TOWARDS ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES FACING US TODAY. I BELIEVE THAT HUMANITY'S VISION FOR EQUALITY, PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT CANNOT BE ACHIEVED UNLESS WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE RESPECTED, PROTECTED, AND FULFILLED ON THE BASIS OF JUSTICE AND EQUITY.

14. AS THE CHAIRMAN OF N.A.M., MALAYSIA CONSIDERS IT ITS RESPONSIBILITY TO LEAD THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS MEETING SOME OF THESE NEW CHALLENGES. THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT REMAINS FULLY COMMITTED TO INTENSIFY AND

EXPAND ITS EFFORTS TOWARDS ENHANCING THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN, AND WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE ALL THE NECESSARY STEPS TO FULFIL THIS OBLIGATION.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

15. IN ADVANCING THE POSITION OF WOMEN, THE MAIN CHALLENGE FOR N.A.M. MEMBER STATES IS TO CREATE – THROUGH LEGAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL MEASURES – A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT THAT PROMOTES BOTH ECONOMIC JUSTICE AS WELL AS GENDER JUSTICE. IN THAT SENSE, THERE IS AN ACUTE NEED FOR GREATER COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL TO PROMOTE A MORE HOLISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF DEVELOPMENT, ONE THAT IS NOT LIMITED TO ECONOMIC GROWTH PER SE, BUT ALSO FOCUSED ON ITS CHARACTER AND DISTRIBUTION.

16. BEYOND THIS, CONCRETE AND SPECIFIC MEASURES ARE ALSO URGENTLY NEEDED TO REMEDY THE INJUSTICES AGAINST WOMEN AND TO RESTORE THEIR SECURITY AND DIGNITY. BELIEVING AS I DO IN THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY, I AM CONFIDENT THAT COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP AMONG N.A.M. MEMBER STATES IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TOWARDS ACHIEVING OUR COMMON GOAL. AS A GROUP, N.A.M. SHOULD BE ABLE TO PROVE TO THE WORLD THAT DIFFERENCES IN CULTURE, RELIGION AND BELIEF DO NOT DETER THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OR HINDER THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN. INSTEAD, THE HETEROGENEITY OF N.A.M., WITH ALL ITS ATTRIBUTES OF DIVERSITY, IS A SOURCE OF STRENGTH, NOT A CAUSE FOR DIVISION AMONG MEMBERS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

17. AS A GROUPING OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, WE CANNOT SUCCEED IN THE CURRENT RAPIDLY CHANGING AND HIGHLY COMPETITIVE INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO UNLESS WE ARE ABLE TO MAKE THE NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS TO FACE THE NEW GLOBAL CHALLENGES, WITHOUT SACRIFICING OUR DEARLY-HELD TRADITIONS, VALUES AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS.

18. EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT EMPOWERING WOMEN AND ACHIEVING GENDER JUSTICE DEMAND MORE THAN JUST LEGAL PROVISIONS AND POLICY FORMULATION. EFFECTIVE EMPOWERMENT REQUIRES CHANGING THE WAY GENDER ROLES AND POWER RELATIONS ARE EXPRESSED IN SOCIETY. AS LEADERS OF OUR COUNTRIES, THIS IS PERHAPS OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE BECAUSE HOW SUCCESSFUL WE ARE AT CHANGING MIND-SETS DETERMINES HOW SUCCESSFUL WE ARE AT ACHIEVING GENDER JUSTICE.

19. INDEED, IT TAKES A GREAT DEAL OF MORAL COURAGE AND FORTITUDE TO BE ABLE TO CHALLENGE LONG-HELD AND DEEPLY INGRAINED SOCIETAL BELIEFS ABOUT THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY, PARTICULARLY IF RELIGION IS CITED AS THE MAIN REASON FOR THEIR SUBJUGATION. IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD, THERE HAVE BEEN INSTANCES WHERE CERTAIN GROUPS IN SOCIETY THAT OPPOSE

THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN FOR THEIR OWN NARROW PURPOSES HAVE USED RELIGION AND CULTURAL NORMS AS A JUSTIFICATION TO PERPETUATE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN. I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT NO SINGLE RELIGION, WHETHER ISLAM, CHRISTIANITY, JUDAISM, BUDDHISM OR OTHER BELIEFS, ADVOCATES ANY FORM OF DISCRIMINATION OR INJUSTICE AGAINST ITS FOLLOWERS, WOMEN OR MEN. CONVERSELY, IN ISLAM FOR EXAMPLE, WE ARE TAUGHT TO CHERISH AND REVERE OUR WOMEN.

20. MY OWN ESPOUSAL OF "ISLAM HADHARI" (OR CIVILISATIONAL ISLAM) FOR EXAMPLE, LISTS DOWN THE TEN PRINCIPLES THAT MUSLIM COUNTRIES MUST DELIVER TO DEMONSTRATE GOOD GOVERNANCE. THE SEVENTH PRINCIPLE REFERS SPECIFICALLY TO THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF MINORITIES AND WOMEN. WOMEN RECEIVE A SPECIFIC MENTION BECAUSE I BELIEVE THAT DESPITE THE FACT THAT WOMEN IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD HAVE BECOME MORE EMANCIPATED, WOMEN IN MANY MUSLIM COUNTRIES CONTINUE TO BE MARGINALISED AND DISCRIMINATED AGAINST. I FIND IT MOST LAMENTABLE, THAT ALTHOUGH WOMEN ARE CERTAINLY NO MINORITY IN TERMS OF NUMBERS, THEY CANNOT BE SAID TO HAVE GAINED THE STATUS THAT THEY ARE ENTITLED TO, IN TERMS OF RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND JUSTICE.

21. AS SUCH, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE FIRST CORRECT ANY MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE PROPER ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY. GENDER-RELATED ASPIRATIONS AND PEOPLE-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT THAT RECOGNISE THE INTERESTS AND CONCERNS OF BOTH WOMEN AND MEN SHOULD BE INFUSED INTO SOCIETY. GENDER JUSTICE SHOULD BECOME A RESPECTED PART OF OUR CULTURE AND TRADITIONS, AND SHOULD NOT BE SEEN AS A NEW IDEA THAT WILL REPLACE THEM. IN THIS WAY, GENDER JUSTICE WILL LEAD TO THE STRENGTHENING OF CAPACITIES, CAPABILITIES, SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, AND EQUAL PARTICIPATION.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

22. AS THE PRIME MINISTER OF MALAYSIA, PERMIT ME TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME OF THE MEASURES THAT WE HAVE INSTITUTED HERE TOWARDS THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AND THE PROMOTION OF GENDER JUSTICE. I AM PROUD TO SAY THAT MALAYSIA HAS CONTINUED, OVER THE YEARS, TO MAKE A CONSCIENTIOUS EFFORT TO ENHANCE THE POTENTIAL OF ITS WOMEN THROUGH VARIOUS MEASURES INCLUDING LAWS, POLICIES, ADVOCACIES, PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES.

23. IN THE LEGAL DOMAIN, MANY AMENDMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE LAWS OF MALAYSIA TO ENSURE THAT WOMEN ARE NOT DISCRIMINATED AGAINST. THE INCLUSION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION INTO OUR FEDERAL CONSTITUTION, WHICH STATES THAT NO DISCRIMINATION SHOULD BE MADE ON THE BASIS OF GENDER, IS ONE OF OUR MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS. AS A RESULT, ALL EXISTING LAWS ARE NOW BEING REVIEWED, AND ALL NEW LAWS SHOULD ADHERE TO THIS PROVISION.

24. TO CREATE GREATER AWARENESS OF GENDER ISSUES IN SOCIETY, THE GOVERNMENT, IN COLLABORATION WITH N.G.O.S, HAS EMBARKED ON A COMPREHENSIVE GENDER SENSITISATION PROGRAMME. THIS INCLUDES PROMOTING LEGAL LITERACY TO EDUCATE WOMEN OF THEIR RIGHTS; SENSITISING POLICY MAKERS, PLANNERS AND IMPLEMENTORS OF THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF WOMEN; ESTABLISHING GENDER DISAGGREGATED INFORMATION SYSTEMS; AND MAINSTREAMING GENDER-BASED PERSPECTIVES INTO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND POLICIES, INCLUDING INTO THE BUDGETING PROCESS, THROUGH A PILOT PROJECT ON GENDER BUDGET ANALYSIS.

25. FURTHERMORE, MALAYSIA VIEWS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AS A NATIONAL ISSUE REQUIRING A NATIONAL SOLUTION. WE AIM TO MAKE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A VIOLENCE-FREE SOCIETY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL MALAYSIANS. TOWARDS THIS END, IN ADDITION TO THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT, MY GOVERNMENT, N.G.O.S AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS HAVE EMBARKED ON SEVERAL CAMPAIGNS WITH THE AIM OF ELIMINATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. IN ORDER TO PROVIDE INTERIM PROTECTION AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE, INCLUDING WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN TRAFFICKED IN, THE CABINET COMMITTEE ON GENDER EQUALITY (WHICH I SET UP TO MONITOR AND DRIVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE GENDER JUSTICE) HAS RECENTLY APPROVED THE SETTING UP OF MORE SHELTER HOMES.

26. IN MALAYSIA, AS ELSEWHERE, THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR THAT LEADS TO THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN HAS BEEN EDUCATION. EVERY OTHER ACHIEVEMENT OF WOMEN IS DUE DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY TO EDUCATION. THEREFORE, MALAYSIA WILL CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN ITS EDUCATION SYSTEM AND PROVIDE MORE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN. AS A MEASURE OF OUR SUCCESS IN THIS REGARD, THERE ARE NOW MORE FEMALES THAN MALES IN OUR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING. IN FACT, DUE TO HIGH EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, MANY MALAYSIAN WOMEN HAVE MANAGED TO BREAK THROUGH THE PROVERBIAL GLASS CEILING. THEY ARE HOLDING HIGH-RANKING POSITIONS IN THE GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING AS CABINET MINISTERS, DEPUTY MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, GOVERNOR OF THE CENTRAL BANK, SOLICITOR GENERAL, AND PRESIDENT OF THE APPEAL COURT AND OTHER JUDGES. WOMEN ARE ALSO MAKING GREAT INROADS INTO THE CORPORATE ARENA. THUS, WITH GREATER COMMITMENT SHOWN BY THE GOVERNMENT AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS, WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE 30 PER CENT TARGET FOR WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AT THE DECISION-MAKING LEVEL, AS SET BY MY GOVERNMENT, WILL BE ACHIEVED.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

27. TO KEEP PACE WITH THE NEW AND EMERGING CHALLENGES OF GLOBALISATION, N.A.M. SHOULD SPARE NO EFFORTS IN CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN. TODAY, YOU WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE VIEWS, INSIGHTS AND IDEAS IN A FRANK

AND FORTHRIGHT MANNER. THE OUTCOME OF YOUR DELIBERATIONS WILL PROVIDE POSITIVE INPUT FOR THE PUTRAJAYA DECLARATION TO BE ADOPTED AT THE END OF THIS MEETING.

28. I WOULD LIKE TO HIGHLIGHT HERE THAT ACHIEVING GENDER JUSTICE IS NOT AN ISSUE THAT CONCERNS WOMEN ALONE. IT ALSO REQUIRES THE ACTIVE SUPPORT AND COMMITMENT OF MEN. GLOBAL CHANGES DEMAND ADAPTATION TO THE NEW REALITIES FACED BY BOTH WOMEN AND MEN. AS SUCH, MEN MUST BE BROUGHT INTO THE FRAMEWORK OF STRATEGY, POLICY AND MICRO POLITICS OF GENDER JUSTICE PROGRAMMES.

29. IN THIS REGARD, I WOULD ENCOURAGE N.A.M. MEMBER STATES TO FIND MORE EFFECTIVE WAYS AND MEANS TO MAKE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN GENDER RELATIONS, IN ORDER TO CREATE AND STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN BASED ON MUTUAL RESPECT. THE PRINCIPLE OF SHARED POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY AT HOME, IN THE WORKPLACE AND IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES, SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED IN ORDER TO BUILD A MORE GENDER RESPONSIVE AND JUST SOCIETY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

30. BASED ON THE COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE OF COUNTRIES, N.A.M. MEMBER STATES COULD ALSO IDENTIFY SPECIFIC AND PRACTICAL PROGRAMMES TO FURTHER PROMOTE THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN. AS A FOLLOW-UP TO THIS MINISTERIAL MEETING, I WOULD ENCOURAGE N.A.M. MEMBER STATES TO IDENTIFY SPECIFIC AND FEASIBLE PROJECTS TO BE UNDERTAKEN AT NATIONAL, REGIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL LEVELS, IN ORDER TO ENHANCE THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN.

31. THUS, TO ENHANCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN IN N.A.M. COUNTRIES, MALAYSIA HAS IDENTIFIED A SPECIFIC PROJECT TO BE DISCUSSED AND CONSIDERED BY N.A.M.. IN THIS REGARD, MALAYSIA WOULD LIKE TO PROPOSE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CENTRE TO BE KNOWN AS THE "N.A.M. CENTRE ON GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT". THE CENTRE WILL ACT AS AN INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTION DEDICATED TO ENHANCING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH A LIFELONG LEARNING APPROACH. THE CENTRE WILL BE EQUIPPED WITH FACILITIES THAT WILL PROVIDE A WIDE RANGE OF CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS, INCLUDING TRAINING AND RESEARCH. FOR THIS PURPOSE, THE CENTRE WILL WORK CLOSELY WITH POLICYMAKERS, SCHOLARS, GENDER STUDIES AND RESEARCH CENTRES, TRAINING AND ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER INTEREST GROUPS.

32. I AM PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT AN EXISTING INSTITUTION – THE SOCIAL INSTITUTE OF MALAYSIA (I.S.M.) WHICH IS UNDER THE MALAYSIAN MINISTRY OF WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT – WILL BE UTILISED AND UPGRADED FOR THIS PURPOSE. IT ALSO GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO ANNOUNCE THAT THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT WILL INITIATE THE FUNDING FOR

DEVELOPING THE "N.A.M. CENTRE ON GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT". FURTHER DETAILS OF THE PROJECT, INCLUDING THE FINANCING AND MODALITIES OF THE CENTRE, WILL BE DISCUSSED AND A SPECIAL COMMITTEE WILL BE SET UP TO LOOK INTO THE MATTER.

33. MALAYSIA BELIEVES THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUCH A CENTRE WOULD SERVE TWO PURPOSES. FIRSTLY, AS AN INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTION, THE CENTRE WOULD BE WELL PLACED TO STIMULATE INTELLECTUAL DISCUSSION, PROMOTE THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS, AND BECOME A CENTRE FOR CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING TOWARDS THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL. SECONDLY, THE CENTRE WOULD ALSO SERVE AS A FOCAL POINT TO ENHANCE COOPERATION AMONG N.A.M. MEMBER STATES, AS WELL AS BETWEEN N.A.M. MEMBER STATES AND OTHER COUNTRIES. THEREFORE, IT IS MALAYSIA'S HOPE THAT N.A.M. MEMBER STATES WILL GIVE FULL SUPPORT TO THIS PROPOSAL.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

34. I WOULD LIKE TO ONCE AGAIN THANK N.A.M. MEMBER STATES FOR THEIR POSITIVE RESPONSE AND PRESENCE AT THIS MINISTERIAL MEETING. I HAVE FULL CONFIDENCE IN THE SUCCESS OF THIS MEETING AND HAVE NO DOUBT THAT YOUR DELIBERATIONS OVER THE NEXT TWO DAYS WILL BEAR FRUITFUL OUTCOMES. I HOPE THAT IT WILL GENERATE INCREASED INTEREST IN GENDER ISSUES AMONG N.A.M. MEMBER STATES, AND WILL ENCOURAGE THEM TO FORGE CLOSER COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION WITHIN THE MOVEMENT. IT IS ALSO MY HOPE THAT THIS MINISTERIAL MEETING ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN WILL NOT BE THE ONLY MEETING OF ITS KIND, BUT WILL BECOME AN IMPORTANT FEATURE OF N.A.M, GIVEN THE CRITICAL NATURE OF THE ISSUE.

35. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXTEND MY CONGRATULATIONS TO THE MALAYSIAN MINISTRY OF WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, WHICH, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF MANY OTHER GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND AGENCIES, SUCCESSFULLY ORGANISED THIS MEETING.

36. THE QUEST FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND JUSTICE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE ONE OF THE HALLMARKS OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY. GLOBALISATION BRINGS WITH IT MANY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES. IT COMPELS US TO BECOME MORE COMPETITIVE, DYNAMIC AND INNOVATIVE. IN THESE TRYING TIMES, THE COST OF WOMEN'S EXCLUSION IS TOO HIGH FOR US TO BEAR. THUS, PROMOTING GENDER JUSTICE AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT ARE NOT ONLY ESSENTIAL BUT HIGHLY STRATEGIC STEPS FOR OUR NATION BUILDING EFFORTS.

37. ON THAT NOTE, IT IS NOW MY PLEASURE AND PRIVILEGE TO DECLARE OPEN THE N.A.M. MINISTERIAL MEETING ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN.

THANK YOU.