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**SPEECH BY  
DATO SERI DR SITI HASMAH BINTI HAJI MOHD ALI  
PRESIDENT OF BAKTI  
AT THE WELCOMING DINNER FOR  
TO PEACE-LINK DELEGATION FROM JAPAN  
AT SERI PERDANA, PUTRAJAYA  
ON THURSDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 1999  
AT 8.00 P.M.**

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It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to Seri Perdana, Putrajaya this evening for this historical gathering of wives of Government leaders in Japan and Malaysia. Some of our guests from Japan have been here before as representatives of their country and we are most happy to see them return with their colleagues to the Garden City of Lights, Kuala Lumpur, to Putrajaya the new Administrative Capital of Malaysia and to Seri Perdana, Putrajaya, the new official residence of the Prime Minister of Malaysia. This reception and welcoming dinner tonight is the first official function at Seri Perdana, Putrajaya organised by BAKTI. Many of our local guests too have not been here before. I therefore welcome you just as warmly and hope that both our foreign and local guests will enjoy meeting with each other and begin a new network of friendship, if not renewing friendship with those who have been here before.

2. When we first heard about the Peace Link Movement of Japan and its membership, BAKTI was happy that another country has got a similar organisation in respect of its membership and objectives. I have visited many developed and developing countries and was surprised that only a few have such an organisation and that too mostly in Asian countries.

3. I will not dwell on BAKTI's objectives as this will be dealt with tomorrow morning. Suffice to say that we welcome your objectives of visiting our beautiful country and to meet with us. We always believe that "seeing is believing" and to meet our counterparts means to know more about each other for this will undoubtedly bring understanding and appreciation of our cultures, life-style and religion.

4. In a multiracial country like Malaysia, we have lived in peace, unity and harmony. 42 years of independence have taught each one of us what it is to be tolerant of each other, what it is to recognise the weakness and strength of any of the multiracial groups, and to improve by assisting one another. What we have achieved now is the efforts made by the Government and every citizen towards attaining peace and harmony, unity in diversity, and a stable and prosperous nation.

5. We treasure peace and good relations, not only with and among ourselves, but also with neighbouring and friendly countries around the world.

6. Malaysia is very fortunate to have good relationship with many countries both in the East and West, developed and developing countries. I have met with many women groups in these countries and the important aspect that became very obvious is that women are becoming more and more the key-role players in advocating Peace.

7. In Africa, a First Ladies' Peace Initiative Movement started in 1995; women in Northern Ireland from both the Catholic and Protestant faction came together to demonstrate for peace and non-violence. In civil strife and war, it is the women and children who suffer most and die, while those who perpetrated the war even gloat over their victory over their enemies.

8. We congratulate the establishment of Peace Link after World War II. We do not know what the future is for our young children and generation. With too many

sophisticated war equipment, nuclear, chemical and biological, another war will destroy nations. We have seen Hiroshima and Nagasaki destroyed. We pray that anything worse than that will never happen again.

9. Therefore, the visit of our distinguished guests from Peace Link Japan is an initiative which BAKTI appreciates and treasure. We thank you for coming to Malaysia first and I hope you will enjoy every moment of your stay in our country.

10. May we together as women and wives of the nations' leaders advocate Peace and goodwill through this visit and good relationship between our two countries.

11. I hope you will relax and enjoy your dinner and our performance which is specially organised for you. Enjoy yourself and relax.

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