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1. Terlebih dahulu saya ucapkan syukur ke hadrat Ilahi kerana saya dapat hadir bersama dalam majlis yang permai dan istimewa pada malam ini. Saya ucapkan sebanyak terima kasih atas jemputan Malaysian Institute of Directors (M.I.D.) dan penganugerahannya kepada saya.

2. It was truly difficult for me to analyze the reasons which qualify me for this prestigious award, especially since it comes from a non-medical institution such as the M.I.D. From its letterhead, it was obvious that the M.I.D. is a national professional institute of company directors. In my search for some relevance to the M.I.D., I realised that I am indeed a director of one and only company. Being untrained and inexperienced, the Chairman of this company even deemed it unnecessary to consult its directors, and subsequently sold my family house without so much of a consultation. As a director, I should sack him and sue him in court, but the company happened to be our Family Holding Co., and its Chairman is my own husband. That was the nearest I ever could admit being involved in managing a company.

3. Going beyond the business concerns, I would like to think that there are directors in the home, in societies and in organisations, to give direction, guidance and advice to the relevant people.

4. In the home, the wife and mother take over the directorship, which she learns mostly through the process of socialisation and advice from parents, in addition to learning from her own experiences. These women toil from morning till night tending to the needs of their husband and children. It is this intimacy, affection and attention that binds the family together, and most importantly, that keeps the young ones from straying and getting involved in undesirable activities.

5. This is especially true now with the rapid pace of economic development and the trend of dual career families in this country. The need for women to work to fulfil their professional obligations and/or to supplement the family's income has eroded the institution of the family. It is in this context that women should review their roles and responsibilities towards their family. As the nation progresses towards the 21st millennium, the problems of working mothers must be given due attention. In this regard, both the Government and the private sector should seriously look into ways to lessen this burden of working mothers by implementing flexi-time working hours as recommended in the Seventh Malaysia Plan and by enforcing the establishment of crèches at the work place.

6. I have just returned from visiting three African states and the Islands of Trinidad and Tobago where I had dialogues with some of these women on issues pertaining to development.

7. From these discussions, I found that Malaysia and these countries share a number of commonalities in terms of socio-economic problems that we experienced before and soon after Merdeka. However, Malaysia has the advantage of having political stability and racial tolerance which we learnt from the May 13th 1969 experience. The visions of our leaders have since then steered the nation towards a more harmonious and united multi-racial society through efficient and pragmatic management based on good work ethics and high moral values.

8. During this transition, Malaysian women have been extremely fortunate as compared with those women I met recently. From only a handful of women professionals, we now have a great number in many fields, both in the public and the private sectors. They are intelligent and capable directors. Malaysian women now hold positions in the higher echelons of their organizations. However, there is a need to increase the number of these women at the policy making levels so that this nation can truly march forward into the 21st century with both men and women working as partners in a newly industrialized nation.

9. The future holds many promises for our women and I hope they will continue to strive harder for more success and become a model to all the women in developing countries around us.

10. I hope this prestigious award given for the first time to a woman will not be the only one from M.I.D. Let this be an incentive to those who really and truly aspire to be excellent directors in their own specialties. I believe there are many of them out there who are more deserving.

11. I like to express again my deep appreciation to M.I.D for the honour bestowed on me. I humbly accept this Honorary Fellowship award on behalf of all the women in Malaysia.