



**SPEECH BY
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MINISTER OF WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

IN CONJUNCTION WITH

GLOBAL CHILD FORUM ON SOUTHEAST ASIA

5 MAY 2016

JW MARRIOT HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR

(SALUTATION)

His Majesty King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden, Honorary Chairman of Global Child Foundation

Her Majesty Queen Silvia of Sweden

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh dan Salam 1Malaysia.

Introduction

1. Terlebih dahulu saya ingin mengucapkan syukur kerana kita dapat bersama-sama menghadiri *Global Child Forum on Children* bagi siri *South East Asia* pada hari ini. Setinggi-tinggi penghargaan kepada penganjur kerana memilih Malaysia sebagai tuan rumah dan tertamanya menjemput saya untuk menyampaikan ucapan. Izinkan saya untuk meneruskan ucapan saya dalam Bahasa Inggeris.

2. Let me first, thank the organisers, Global Child Forum, UN Global Compact, ASEAN CSR Network and other organisations that support the Global Child Forum for Southeast Asia. It is an opportunity for Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, Malaysia to be a part of this great forum as it is in line with the Ministry's vision.

3. This is the first Global Child Forum for Southeast Asia and indeed a privilege that The Majesties, the King and Queen of Sweden decided to have the forum here in Malaysia. I am truly honoured to stand here and it gives me great pleasure to extend a warm welcome on behalf of Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development to all delegates from across the ASEAN countries and everyone here. I wish you all Selamat Datang!

4. Initiated by His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen of Sweden in 2009, Global Child Forum is an independent, global multi-stakeholder platform for informed dialogue and thought leadership on how to advance children's rights in support of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Global Child Forum aims at gathering leaders from business, governments, academia and civil society in a joint effort to implement children's rights.

5. As the forum's theme will be "**Mobility and Connectivity: Children's Rights and Business in the ASEAN Region**", the discussion will focus on the solutions and opportunities to improve the lives of the children and youth in the ASEAN region – and what all of us can do, despite sectors or organisational belongings. Thus, I believe that the purpose of the Global Child Forum for Southeast Asia to call on all parts of society, with a special focus on business to take action to strengthen children's rights in the region may be achieved successfully.

6. I personally believe the decision of having this Forum in Malaysia as well as the chosen theme is very much timely as the Parliament just recently passed the Child Bill (amendment) 2015 and among the very many highlights of the amendment is the importance of connectivity, of participation, of involvement, not only the community but also the children themselves.

7. Like a proud mother always "boasting" their child's development, allow me to share just a few key amendments that I believe is much anticipated in Malaysia and relevant to this Forum. The first new concept I would like to highlight is on family based care. Similar from the commonly used term 'deinstitutionalisation', this approach is to instil the concept of 'Family First', an approach we at the Ministry strongly believe in. The amendment gives priority by law that when a child is in need of protection, care and rehabilitation, including children out of control, the option of placement should start with family or at least in a family setting whilst considering placing them in a welfare institution as the last option.

8. This is crucial particularly in ensuring healthy and wholesome development of every child. This is also to support studies and findings that emphasises the importance of every child in getting the attention, protection, care and, of course love from a family setting, particularly a father and mother's nurturing and upbringing approach.

9. Children participation also become one of the key amendments to the Child Act 2001 with the establishment of the National Council for Children. This is truly a big progress for children as it acts in advising and proposing recommendations to the Government in all issues related to protection, care, rehabilitation, development and participation of children at national, regional and international level. Interestingly enough, the element of children participation is obvious, as the council will consist of 2 children representatives. I would like to believe this is a 'one of its kind' council, since there will be under 18 attending this council and I look forward to chairing the council.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Situation of Children in Malaysia and Region

10. As we all know, children are important assets towards country's development. Indeed they will inherit our legacy and the children of our country are our future. It is in their hands that we will all be seeing our development – so their wellbeing, rights and possibilities in life is of uttermost importance, today and tomorrow.

11. In 1995, Government of Malaysia, among other countries has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). To date, all Asean Countries have signed the convention. As a signatory to CRC, state parties are obligated in making sure that it is the right of a child to be protected, to be represented, to be given the opportunity to participate and most importantly, to be heard. With regards to this, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, Malaysia is sturdily and consistently work towards the realisation of children's rights, not just to comply to CRC solely, nonetheless, as our main commitment in accomplishing development of the nation, specifically children.

12. While children in the country and region are enjoying more rights than previous generations, more can definitely be done to ensure children are safe, educated and healthy in order to develop the full potential of the child. Like other countries in ASEAN, Government of Malaysia has made tremendous efforts at national level of which, the Government is working closely with other Government agencies, corporate sectors, NGOs and even communities through National Blue Ocean Strategy (NBOS) in conducting lots of programmes for children. Those advocacy programmes, workshop on intervention programmes and conferences are our testimony in making sure every single child in Malaysia knows their rights and shall be given opportunity to grow with all the rights and protection.

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13. Coming back to the theme of this Forum, I was made to understand, in the regional benchmark study, which will be discussed this morning, the Global Child Forum and Boston Consulting Group (BCG) have evaluated 289 companies from across the region, to assess if and how companies address and report on children's rights. The results show that companies to a large extent have a sense of the importance of being a good corporate citizen, by contributing to programmes and community investment initiatives. However, the results of the study also tell us that there is a lot of work to do, and huge opportunities for companies and others to act - as children's rights have not yet made it into the board rooms and strategic business analyses in most companies in the region. I look forward to read the recommendations coming out from the discussion.

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Opportunities in the ASEAN Context

14. Today, we will hear from leading experts, business leaders and practitioners on how children's rights can be accelerated in the region. Indeed, the ASEAN region enjoys increased mobility and connectivity, and with this comes new opportunities for business to protect, support and advance children's rights. We will today focus on opportunities presented by technological progress, a young, growing and migrating workforce, and the expanding travel and tourism in the region.

15. The ASEAN community has entered a new phase with the formation of the ASEAN Economic Community as of January 2016 – a single market for goods, services, capital and labour. ASEAN is one of the world's fastest growing markets, and this brings opportunities for business, and indeed for business to be done in a sustainable manner. Every chance should be taken to ensure that the power of business is used as an engine to drive change for the better of the region's children.

16. Indeed, with the large share of the population in the region being children and youth, this is a great opportunity and investment for a sustainable and prosperous ASEAN. While the region is increasingly connected, there are of course vast differences in the adoption and connectivity across the region, with Indonesia being termed a 'digital nation'. Singapore having almost 75 percent of its population online and by contrast, Myanmar with only 1 percent of its population accessing internet.

17. In the era of easy and fast connectivity, the world has become borderless particularly with the use of internet is just at our fingertips. Access to knowledge, participation, leisure and play are fundamental rights of all children, as enshrined in the CRC. However, the convention in particular to Article 17 refers to access to information by children and protection from "information and material injurious to his or her well-being". The Internet, mobile phones and other electronic media offer opportunities for these rights to be fulfilled, as they provide children and young people with unlimited access to information.

18. We often remind our children on safety issues and remind them not to talk to strangers. Decades ago this was a simple task to monitor. The whole idea of talking to strangers has changed with internet and the “dark side” of vast connectivity is our children are exposed and easily manipulated from their innocence into pornography, cyber bullying and worst, prostitution. Actions had to be taken particularly in creating a holistic protection system hence for Malaysia the development of the Child Online Protection in 2015, consisting of multiple and multi layer stake holder, including corporates pioneering in digital access is a smart move for Malaysia. This is an area where we all can join forces, to make sure children are safe online as well as offline.

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19. Advancing children’s rights is the key to a stable, prosperous and sustainable region. Investing in children is investing for the future of the country. This year is the start of the implementation of the SDGs, the new Agenda 2030. The new agenda is clear – we shall leave no one behind in the quest to make poverty history. This means that we need to work together to make sure that all children in the region is benefitting from the development and that the rights of all children, regardless of nation, grouping, age or condition, are respected and promoted.

20. ASEAN vision 2025 that charts the broad strategic direction of ASEAN in this decade (2016 – 2025), aimed at consolidating ASEAN community building, building upon and deepening the integration process. The ASEAN 2025 vision which is aspiring towards a politically cohesive, economically integrated and socially responsible ASEAN must be the “champion of change” for the children’s rights to be accelerated and realised. Business and social must be discussed on the same agenda, same table just like the Forum today, even though both areas do have different goals, what separates us, also binds us together, for the benefit of a better future.

21. Before come to an end, I look forward to get from this Global Child Forum for Southeast Asia suggestions, solutions, sharing of best practises and recommendations to address the issues for all children in Southeast Asia, I also hope you do find time to enjoy our Malaysian hospitality in our culture, food and fashion. This forum is held in the heart of Kuala Lumpur where all attractions and souvenirs are just a walk away.

Thank you.

Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development

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