OFFICIAL REMARK BY

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DEPUTY MINISTER OF WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

IN CONJUCTION WITH

THE PREMIER WORKSHOP ON DISABILITY INCLUSION IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING (IHLs)

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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

[Salutations]

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.
Salam Sejahtera, Salam 1Malaysia, Salam Perpaduan and a very good morning to all of you.

INTRODUCTION

1. Alhamdulillah, all praises be to Allah, by whose Grace and Blessings, we are gathered here today for the opening of the **Premier Workshop on Disability Inclusions of Higher Learning (IHLs).** To all the participants, allow me to welcome you and hope that this workshop will serve as an excellent platform for all of us to exchange information, ideas as well as best practices on current developments and issues pertaining to disability inclusion. Today's programme will also set the stage for strengthening cooperation and collaboration through the participation of various agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), corporate sectors and the academia.

2. Before I proceed, I would like to acknowledge the collaboration with International Islamic University Malaysia for the continuous efforts to strengthen the wellbeing of the person with disabilities in Malaysia. The organization of this Premier Workshop is indeed very timely. As Malaysia sets its pace to become a fully developed nation in the 21st century, the wellbeing of its people must form one of its most important objectives in the country's action plan. The New Economic Model, for instance, has specifically stated inclusiveness as one of its three goals, apart from sustainability and achieving a high income status. Disability inclusion would certainly be part of it.

DATA ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN MALAYSIA

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

3. The World Health Organization has estimated that about 15% of the world population has disabilities. This is equivalent to 1.1 billion out of the 7.3 billion world population today. 1.1 billion is not an insignificant number to ignore. With an increasingly aging population, the number will certainly grow bigger.

4. The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development puts great emphasis on data collection to ensure proper planning with regards to its target groups, including persons with disabilities. As of **December 2015**, there are only **365,380** persons with disabilities registered with the Department of Social Welfare representing only 1.22% of the total population in Malaysia. I believe that there are a lot more that are not registered with us. The Ministry will continue to intensify its efforts to encourage more individual and families to register themselves and their family members who are persons with disabilities. I would like to take this opportunity to urge more to register so that the government can plan more precisely on the needs of people with disabilities in the future.

Government's Commitments and Strategies to Make the Rights Real for Persons with Disabilities in Malaysia

5. In ensuring the disadvantaged group especially persons with disabilities enjoy equal opportunities, full participation in the society and be mainstreamed into the national agenda, Malaysia has **ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 19 July 2010**, thus joining the global community in affirming the human rights of persons with disabilities.

6. Prior to that, the Government of Malaysia has formulated the **Policy and Plan of Action for the Persons with Disabilities** in 2007. This Policy its Plan of Action which was drafted based on the gist of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), served as the foundation and basis to ensure persons with disabilities in this country enjoy their full and effective participation in the society on an equal basis with others. This Policy recognises that persons with disabilities are free from any physical, social, economic, cultural as well as attitudinal barriers.

7. Following that, the **Persons with Disabilities Act** was passed by the Parliament in December 2007 and came into force in July 2008. The Act is a right-based law which is aimed to ensure that the rights, interests and welfare of persons with disabilities are protected. This Act is also intended to assist persons with disabilities towards a better life and to be able to contribute in the national development.

8. With the enforcement of the Act, the **National Council for Persons with Disabilities** was established in August 2008 and chaired by the Minister of Women, Family and Community Development. Among the functions of the Council as stipulated in the Act is to monitor the implementation of the national policy and national plan of action relating to persons with disabilities and also to make recommendations to the Government on all aspects of life including matters relating to support, care, protection, rehabilitation, development and well-being of persons with disabilities. The members of the Council consist of both the government agencies and experts in the field of disabilities including individuals who are persons with disabilities. Their involvement in this decision-making process is crucial in upholding the rights of persons with disabilities in

this country. The Council is assisted by the **Department for the Development of Persons with Disabilities**, which was set up in May 2009, in the performance of its functions and the exercise of its power under the Act.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

9. In November 2012, Malaysia together with other members of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) adopted the **Incheon Strategy to Make the Right Real for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific** to catalyst action that shall accelerate, during the **new Asian and the Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013 – 2022**, the achievement of the regional vision of an inclusive society that ensures, promotes and upholds the rights of all persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific. The Incheon Strategy provides the Asian and the Pacific region, and the world, with the first set of regionally agreed disability-inclusive development goals.

10. Besides, to enable persons with disabilities to be involved at decision making levels, the government has appointed **YB Senator Bathmawathi Krishnan as the 2nd Senator among PWDs** on 18 November 2013, replacing the late 1st Senator YB Senator Prof. Datuk Dr. Ismail Md. Salleh (he passed away in 27 August 2009). This appointment is indeed a significant milestone for the country to allow the voices of persons with disabilities to be heard in the Upper House of the Parliament.

11. The government's commitments in ensuring the development of full potential and well-being of persons with disabilities do not stop there.

The government will continuously pursue its efforts to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in the country. The government also believes that in order to achieve the aspiration to become a fully developed nation by the year 2020, every citizen of the country should be given the opportunity to realise their full potentials. Thus, the Government of Malaysia in its **11th Malaysia Plan (2016-2020) introduced inclusivity strategy, aims to unlock the potential of productivity to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth, as the national agenda.**

EDUCATION FOR PERSON WITH DISABILITIES

12. Access to education is an essential means through which persons with disabilities can achieve full and equal rights as stated in the CRPD. Education can ensure stable employment, financial independence and a dignified life, where they can act as a contributing member of the society. Although equal opportunity and full participation of persons with disabilities is enshrined in the UN CRPD and Malaysia's Persons with Disabilities Act, there still exist attitudinal and environmental barriers that hamper the achievement of such ideal environment for disability inclusion.

13. As leaders and decision-makers in an Institution of Higher Learning, you have a very important role to play in granting the right of education to all, including those with disabilities. We truly hope that this workshop can enlighten us to have a better understanding and appreciation on the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, and to provide the necessary adjustments and accommodation for them to excel in tertiary education, just as their non-disabled counterparts.

DISABILITY SERVICES UNIT, IIUM

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

14. I am very pleased to inform that the IIUM has established the Disability Services Unit under the Office of Deputy Rector (Student Affairs), as a unit dedicated to cater to the special needs of students and staff with disabilities. I am equally excited to know that the IIUM has established the IIUM Disability Endowment Fund as well to assist students and staff with disabilities, and has also fostered linkages with other organizations, such as Lembaga Zakat Selangor, to assist in improving the facilities provided for persons with disabilities at the IIUM. The Ministry is well aware about higher cost of living borne by persons with disabilities due to their disabilities. Hence, such efforts to support students and staff with disabilities are truly commendable and should be emulated by other universities as well. We, at the Ministry, are confident that the IIUM will continue to work hard towards disability inclusion in tertiary education.

CLOSING

15. It is my sincere hope that this work shop will not only serve as a platform for participants to discuss various approaches and its applications but also provide practical experiences and learning with regards to current issues on persons with disabilities. Together, I believe we can create an enabling environment for them. I look forward to more collaboration in the future, in our attempt to make Malaysia a better home for all. Again, I would like to congratulate the organizers and all parties that have made this Premier Workshop a reality today. My appreciation also goes to all

the officials representing the various government agencies in making this Workshop a success.

16. I believe to make Persons with Disabitities's right real and create an inclusive society for all, it requires consorted efforts by all parties including government, civil societies and communities as a whole. Without this engagement and commitment, we won't be able to move further in achieving this vision.

17. Hence, with the recitation of ***Bismillahir rahmanir rahim,*** **in the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful**, I hereby declare this 'Premier Workshop on Disability Inclusion in Institutions of Higher Learning' officially open.

Thank you.

Wa billahi taufiq wal hidayah. *Wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.*