First of all, allow me to begin by praising God the Almighty for the opportunity given to be the host of the 4th East Asia Ministerial Forum on Families. The Senior Officials Forum provides us a platform to discuss and exchange views and experiences on programmes and services to strengthen families in our respective countries.

On behalf of the Ministry Women, Family and Community Development, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all delegates to Kuala Lumpur and hope we will have a successful and productive meeting.

We reaffirm our commitment towards the full implementation of the Hanoi Statement for Regional Cooperation on the Family (2004),
the Singapore Statement on Resilient Families (2006) and the Bali Statement on strengthening collaboration for programmes on family resilience with the aim of exploring the broader role of the family in society (2008).

Malaysia recognizes the family as a natural and fundamental social unit that provides valuable human resource and forms the backbone for solidarity, security and nation building. Malaysia believes in the importance of family development in line with the objective of creating a caring society; **Family is PRIORITY NO. 1**

**Madam Chairperson,**

Allow me to begin by describing some current family trends in Malaysia. The changing structure of population also brings about changes to family structure. Currently, Malaysia has a population of 29 million, with a growth rate of 2.5 per cent per annum. In terms of family and household structure in Malaysia, the rate of growth of households (3.8 per cent per annum) was higher than the population growth rate (2.5 per cent per annum) which resulted an increase of Malaysian families from 3.5 million in 1991 to 4.8 million in 2000 and more than 7 million in 2010.

However, the average household size / family size declined from 4.8 persons in 1991 to 4.6 in 2000 and 4.4 in 2009. The dominant Malaysian family structure has also changed from the extended family to the nuclear family. There was an increase in the proportion of nuclear families from 60 per cent in 1991 to 65 per cent in 2000.
Malaysian families today are facing numerous challenges related to changing family values and structures, pressures of complex family responsibilities and inadequate support systems. Some of these key challenges include increase in divorce, family dysfunction, child abuse, domestic violence, drug addiction, HIV/AIDS and family related matters such as family economic instability. At the same time, the impact of globalization led to new values being accepted by the young people.

**Madam Chairperson,**

The Malaysian Government realizes the need to formulate and establish a specific policy that can provide support and protection for families to be strong and resilient. To date, there are several family-friendly initiatives but these are 'implicit' in the government sector, private sector and others. Hence, the National Family Policy and its Plan of Action has been initiated to urge all stakeholders to consistently have a ‘family perspective’ in all endeavors and to promote a ‘Family 1st’ concept, as a mean to ensure family strengthening and well-being.

This policy will ensure that all citizens can live in a safe and conducive environment to achieve values such as responsibility, respect, availability and integrity which is critical for family well-being and the development of resilient nation. The proposed family policy provides a framework for the implementation of measures designed to better meet the changing needs of Malaysian families to ensure the well-being of families and improve their quality of life. Specifically, it hopes to incorporate family wellbeing, based on universal and multicultural values, in all family development programmes.
Madam Chairperson,

Since the previous forums, we are still concerned that social problems and poverty is still widespread and will affect the harmony and stability of the family. Hence, with the Government Transformation Programme announced by our Prime Minister, has identified low income households as one of the National Key Result Areas (NKRA). The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development has served in on three focuses namely the low-income households, the poor and vulnerable and the marginalised groups. The ministry’s focus is on the social and economic aspects of addressing the issue of low-income households, defined as those earning less than approximately 645USD (RM2,000) a month.

As Malaysia moves towards being a developed high-income country by 2020, we must ensure that our family institution is not adversely affected with the transformation. The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development has been given the entrusted to implement the action plans. The ministry has been working strategically with various Ministries and agencies to successfully implement the plan through three major steps; standardizing the definition of low-income groups to ensure the right people are targeted, implementing quick, high-impact initiatives immediately and lay the groundwork for longer-term actions. These initiatives will improve immediate welfare as well as build income-earning potential to ensure sustainability; and put enablers in place to ensure that the poverty eradication programmes are both effective and efficient.
The ministry has also introduced the 1Azam action plan which aims to create income opportunities for the poor and the hard core poor group. The focus of the plan is to help the rural people enhance their livelihoods. 1Azam consists of Azam Niaga to generate business opportunities through training and micro credit facilities; Azam Tani to encourage participation in agriculture-based activities; Azam Kerja to offer jobs that do not require high education and skills; and Azam Khidmat to encourage participants to be self-employed by providing services.

To ensure the action plans are successfully implemented, the ministry has been given funds to carry out various programmes for the benefit of the people, especially the low-income group including poor and hard core poor. To date, more than 50 per cent reduction of families categorized as hardcore poor has been achieved. From the 44,643 hardcore poor households identified, 22,753 have been removed from this category. Strategically, the implementation of various programs for low-income household is to enable them to get better quality of life and uplift the family social well-being of the people.

**Madam Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Malaysia acknowledges that there is a need to develop a comprehensive set of indicators to evaluate and monitor the well-being of family institution. Currently, related information regarding Malaysian families is captured through the Malaysian Quality of Life report which is conducted periodically by the Economic Planning Unit (EPU), Malaysia. The Quality of life of life index ids developed based on 11 domains of life including family life
domains which consist of 4 main indicators; divorce, crude birth rate, household size and juvenile crime.

There is a critical need to develop a set of comprehensive indicators to measure the well-being of the Malaysian family. Although information on the statistics of the family based on periodic studies carried out by the different Ministries and government agencies are available, a set of indicators on family well-being are not yet available. The proposed family well-being index will be used for describing and monitoring trends as well as provides useful information for policy makers, researchers and program implementers.

**Madam Chairperson,**

The three statements; Hanoi, Singapore and Bali have all fully recognised that sharing of information, research, policies and best practices on family strengthening, resilience and well-being is the key point of East Asia forum on families. As a natural progression, we would like to suggest that continues explore and deliberate on the development a family repository.

**Madam Chairperson,**

The family in Malaysia as in other developed countries has undergone fundamental changes which have undermined the health and stability of the family. However, Malaysian families are generally still strong. As there are many issues and challenges faced by families today, new programs and strategies have to be designed and implemented to address these issues and help Malaysian families cope with the challenges of today’s living as
well as shape tomorrow’s generations. The full success of efforts made towards this end will depend not only on the government’s commitment but also members of the civil society. As family development issues are universal issues that have far-reaching implications, the participation and commitment of NGOs, the private sector and the community in planning and implementation of family development programs are pivotal and are greatly encouraged.

Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development
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