

SPEECH BY MISS EDIOLA PASHOLLARI

**ACTING SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE WORLD ASSEMBLY OF YOUTH
AND
CHAIRPERSON OF THE 9TH MELAKA INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DIALOGUE**

**AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE
9TH MELAKA INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DIALOGUE
“YOUTH AND GENDER EQUALITY”
FRIDAY 25TH JUNE 2009 AT 0900 HRS
PUTERI RESORT AYER KEROH, MELAKA**

Rt. Hon Datuk Seri Mohd Ali bin Mohd Rustam, Chief Minister of Melaka
and the President of the World Assembly of Youth

Datuk Datuk and Datin Datin

WAY Executive Committee Members,

Representatives of WAY member organisations,

Invited Guests,

Melaka International Youth Dialogue participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good Morning and Welcome Everyone to the Historical State of Melaka and to the **9th MELAKA INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DIALOGUE** with the theme **“YOUTH AND GENDER EQUALITY”**. This year’s event is very important as social and economic indicators for developing countries consistently show that the issue of gender equality bears the brunt of hardship in poor communities.

The purpose of this year’s dialogue is to build the capacity and awareness of gender equality among our youths. The key agent for effective grassroots implementation of poverty reduction programs and economic regeneration is in the understanding of **“what is gender equality?”**. The efforts of developing countries to modernize discriminatory laws and stimulate gender equality participation can be frustrated by the deep-rooted cultural barriers that so often run in parallel with poverty.

It is vital that we address this issue and help our youths and society understand that there should not be any barrier of gender equality in solving the challenges of this era.

The concept of equality means much more than treating all persons in the same way. We take a broad view of what is necessary. This means that it is not enough to hear, repeatedly, of acceptance of the principle of equality. There is a need for youth councils and their community organizations to accept the challenge of making special efforts to address the situational

imbalance.

Our objectives at this conference are:

- To achieve a behavior modification amongst youth;
- To promote equality of opportunities between young women and young men in all its functions;
- To eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sex amongst youth;
- To increase youth awareness of their responsibilities regarding the gender equality;
- To promote equal access to decision-making amongst youth;
- To provide and create gender-positive media message amongst youth;
- To improve the national and international policies that deal with the gender equality and its effects on society;
- To recommend improvements to the current systems of education for youth worldwide on gender equality;
- To improve cooperation between governments, civil society and private sector to address gender equality;
- To have stronger, more effective national youth councils with leading roles in the fight against gender inequality.

Therefore, the integration of the gender perspective in all activities is a necessity to be shared among the youths so that there will be a greater understanding and appreciation within their community.

We also recognize that there will have to be profound changes in community attitudes before we can see significant improvements.

What is needed is action in the form of comprehensive programs with targets and timetables.

Our experience is that the national strategies and plans being adopted by Governments and other agencies often provide the necessary framework for realization of gender equality, but that the framework is not exploited for its true value.

To quote the UN Secretary-General - on the eve of this year's International Women's Day - said that without achieving gender equality for girls in education, the world has no chance of achieving many of the ambitious health, social and development targets it has set for itself. We share that view, emphatically.

I hope that you will reap knowledge, encouragement and even ways from the many speakers that we have here. During the workshop let us put our hearts and minds together as we discuss the pertinent issues that can help our youth views gender equality in an unbiased manner.

Comprehensive educational program needs to be made available for all youths within our circle to realize that there must a partnership of genders in order to make it a success.

I strongly believe that if we are willing to put aside our own prejudices and biasness we can achieve our objectives and goals during this dialogue.

Tomorrow during our workshop sessions let us put on our thinking caps and brainstorm away as we collaborate together to produce a workable declaration for all our youth on gender equality.

As you mingle among each other, please do take time to share more than just your name and your country. Share the passion you have towards gender equality and if you struggle with it, listen with open hearts and ears to your esteemed new friends as they share.

Together, united we can not only conquer, but build a new bridge, that will encompass all gender for a better future for our youth.

I do hope that you will find this dialogue stimulating, educational, entertaining and empowering.

Thank you!