

12th Melaka International Youth Dialogue

Opening Ceremony,

Speech by President of WAY

Datuk Datuk, Dati Datin,

Representatives of WAY member organizations,

Invited guests,

Melaka international Youth Dialogue Participants,

Ladies and gentlemen:

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 12th Melaka International Youth Dialogue themed **Health, It's my Right!** As the President of WAY, I am excited over the outcomes of the past twelve years, having tackled youth issues in diverse and multiple ways. Since I took office, it has been my heart to continue in the footsteps of our former president of WAY cum Chief Minister of Melaka, YAB Datuk Seri Mohd Ali bin Mohd Rustam, by making this event a success and not a ceased project. It always gives me delight whenever I, together with the team at WAY we plan on such events, bringing the youth together, convening on matters of importance and improving their world.

I appreciate all of the guests who made themselves available, this is a clear indication of a hunger and passion to always do exceptionally and exceedingly well to help and be involved in the impacting of the lives of the young people. I believe I am not the only one who is honored today but also the people we are all gathered here for; the youth, can bear witness to that fact, that they also are honored to have you here. I also acknowledge the unique presence of every youth seated in this place; truly you are a caliber of young people who desire to see change. You know your rights and you have responded to them in a propitious way. I also like to recognize Ms Ediola, the Secretary General of WAY and her team for having tirelessly worked to bring all of us to this place and mobilizing young and vibrant volunteers to assist in the running of the program.

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Distinguished guests, for the past decades we have been fighting for our rights as humans and promising change has been made throughout the times. That is why at WAY we are driven to observe the charter for Human Rights Declaration. We seek to be involved in the exertion for human rights in an extraordinary way by focusing on the youth particularly. For the past twelve years we have demonstrated such efforts through the Melaka International Youth Dialogue, and this year is no exception as we are handling one of the gravest human concerns, health as a human right. The topic was long for tabled and mutually discussed upon by the organizing team until we reached a final decision based on the need in this era.

The global outlook of health is not of a good standing any more. Our health care systems are being paralyzed by a number of outcomes and a world population of seven billion people worsens the condition. Ladies and gentlemen, according to our research at WAY, health statistics given by World Health Organization, depict that many young girls indulge in early pregnancies and their health status is jeopardized by circumstances that environ them, millions of youth are involved in violent activities, live in depression, infected by HIV/AIDS while millions of them die from dietary related problems; obesity which causes coronary heart related diseases.

We also found out that one of the causes of these predicaments is that most of the young people lack adequate education on health especially those in populated rural and remote areas, while a population of them are marginalized and abandoned by the society that ought to take care of them especially the physically disabled and those living below the poverty datum. Most villages and towns lack developments hence a shortage of infrastructural health facilities, education health centers and counseling centers for the youth. Consequently it becomes hard to keep body, spirit and soul healthy due to lack of knowledge. This is the key reason why education since primary level is important. Education keeps on advancing and there are new discoveries every day, especially in the area of medicine, which is why we have to educate the youth from

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a tender age. Everyone has the right to education and education on health should be designed in a way that will protect the rights of young people.

There have been many complaints lodged about dysfunctional health care facilities and health care systems that cater for the rich and neglect the underprivileged. Most of the times it is the unemployed, poor and marginalized youth who are disadvantaged to receive the best care treatment because quality health services are associated with how much money one has. That is why on my own conclusion I would say only the fit and rich are able to survive in the societies while millions of disadvantaged youth are dying yearly due to higher costs of survival.

Our systems are interlinked and dependent on another; without good quality education systems, it is hard to maintain health systems and sustain the planet and the effect of economic downturns; recessions and inflations increase the standard of living and affordability and access to necessities as health facilities and medical attention. We should affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunity.

Friends, with the way the world events are turning out, it has become of utmost importance to reform our health care systems. We need productive and effective health policies that meet the specific needs of every community group worldwide. That is why this dialogue is necessary, so that the youth can be active in participatory decision making by recommending ideas that best suits and improve their world. These generations of youth are the next tier of leaders and inclusion of their voice in our decisions is definitely going to help develop our nations.

Health shouldn't just be viewed as a problem but an opportunity to train unemployed youth in community based health services, prenatal care, emergency obstetric care and family planning and expand services in a strategic manner in developing countries. In

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that way we get to educate and train the youth, create employment for the jobless and improve the health status of our communities.

On our own, as WAY, we are pushing the organization to work hard towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 such as:

Goal 5: Health and HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases

Goal 9: Improving maternal health;

through our Third Plan of Action (2010 – 2014) “**The Catalyst for Transformation and Improvement**” by taking full responsibility and obligation to be internationally coordinated with other bodies to achieve the MDGs. We shall fight diseases, save more lives by improving education channels to reaching the youth nationally, regionally and internationally. Through our headquarters, we shall produce and disseminate publications, raise awareness, improve knowledge through campaigns, events and support peer participatory learning systems at WAY via volunteerism. The fact that other diseases are not mentioned does not mean exclusion or are not equally important and will not be tackled.

WAY shall work closely with member countries, youth councils and organizations to assist in this health epidemic. We also seek to involve the strength of governments, private sectors and the rest of our communities to assist in the fight for development of health systems. Concerning the youth WAY will continue to tap on their potency through participatory learning systems, peer to peer learning and physical involvement and training in the field of health and volunteerism. WAY also encourages youth disabled participation. We desire to realize the full potential of youth, through access to opportunities, to develop, participate and contribute as responsible citizens towards a peaceful, healthy, and productive globe. This struggle is for everyone and we all should be motivated to make an impact and a change in our respective sectors.

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On that note I urge all of you here to take this gathering acutely serious, and make a better impact for this year. This is an international opportunity to mutually work together and produce a declaration that is ultimately going to revolutionize the world health system at large. Youth, let your voice be heard, build international networks to work closely with other participants and organizations on the basis of health in the future. Burdens and crisis of nations and communities are easier to address through networking.

I hope to see gender equality in the way we handle this issue and our relations with one another because this is one of the core fundamentals of WAY – **Gender Equality!** I strongly discourage castigation against others all in the name of contentions, gender biasness and all other reasons. The first step to taking responsibility towards health is if we each make a decision to change first, ourselves and our perspectives, then we can be able to help others as well. We should make it our obligation to be stewards over our health systems and other peoples' lives especially the youth.

In this dialogue, we are the emissaries of our nations so let us represent them in a courteous manner. I urge all of us to have clear and achievable visions for our nations. With that I would like to say let us have a pleasant dialogue and may we all be rewarded with the best outcome and success of it. I wish all of us a buoyant dialogue.

Thank you.