

INFORMATION RELATING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREED CONCLUSIONS ON “WOMEN’S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE CHANGING WORLD OF WORK”

Pursuant to the request by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for member states to provide information on the implementation of the agreed conclusions on “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work” for the preparation of the United Nations Secretary-General’s report in accordance with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolutions 2015/6 and 2020/15, which include particularly on concrete examples of measures taken and their impacts or results, including for the COVID-19 response and recovery, identify good practices and key lessons, gaps and challenges, and highlight successful inclusive collaboration with stakeholders, the following are the Government of Malaysia’s (Government) responses to the raised concerns.

(i) What specific actions have been taken to enact, strengthen and enforce laws and regulatory frameworks that ensure gender equality and prohibit discrimination against women in the world of work?

2. The Government has prioritised drafting a Sexual Harassment Bill that aims to protect women’s rights and dignity, including at the workplace and in public. The Government views sexual harassment as a form of gender-based discrimination that needs focused attention. In this regard, the drafting of this Sexual Harassment Bill will provide the comprehensive definition of sexual harassment, effective complaint and solution mechanisms, remedial elements and penalties. It will also pave the way for a practical foundation of a comprehensive Gender Equality Bill.

3. The Government is also taking a proactive approach to reassess the existing legislative framework, addressing gender inequality. In this regard, the Employment Act 1955 [Act 265] is currently being reviewed to ensure that it remains relevant to the current and future needs in the workforce. One of the significant improvements is incorporating a new section on the prohibition of discrimination, which considers gender-based discrimination in ensuring the employee’s protection and benefits are improvised.

(ii) What specific actions have been taken to enact, strengthen and enforce laws and regulations that uphold the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value in both the public and private sectors?

4. The Government has given utmost priority to women empowerment and gender equality in addressing the existing gap between men and women. Women have been identified as one of the nine target groups under its Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 (SPV 2030), which will be given priority in order to improve their socio-economic status and to ensure that the policies will be based on gender sensitivity in encouraging more female participation and leadership in both the private and public sectors. Malaysia has also set the target for its labour market to be free from discrimination over gender in upholding and improving economic outcomes for women.

5. In addition, the Government also deposited the instrument of ratification of the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention 1970 (No.131) with the International Labour Organisation (ILO). In conjunction with the ratification, the Minimum Wages Order 2012 was enacted to provide a minimum wage to foreign and local workers irrespective of gender, which is reviewed on a two-year basis. Throughout the years (2012-2019), the minimum wage had increased from RM900 to the current RM1,100.

(iii) What measures have been taken to enact, strengthen and enforce laws and policies to eliminate all forms of violence and harassment against women in the world of work and provide means of effective redress in cases of noncompliance?

6. Apart from drafting the Sexual Harassment Bill and Gender Equality Bill, the Government had amended the Employment Act 1955 in 2012 to include special provisions of Part XVA to address sexual harassment issues at the workplace. This section empowers the Director General of Labour to direct the employer to establish internal mechanisms at work and the power to investigate cases related to sexual harassment. This provision covers all employees under the Employment Act 1995, regardless of the wage limit.

7. A 'Guideline for Handling Sexual Harassment Case at the Workplace' was amended in the public sector. It took effect on 12 December 2018, highlighting the role of Psychology Officers, Organisational Counsellors, Integrity or Human Resource Officers and Heads of Department in managing sexual harassment complaints. The Public Service Department has also carried out a series of awareness and prevention programmes since 18 January 2019 at Federal and State agencies.

(iv) What measures have been taken to mainstream a gender perspective into education and training programmes in order to facilitate the effective transition from education or unemployment to work?

8. The Government has collaborated with the UNDP to carry out a gender mainstreaming project entitled Strengthening and Enhancing the Inclusiveness of Women towards an Equitable Society in the 11th Malaysia Plan (2016-2020). The project has identified areas for improvements in the existing women empowerment and gender equality initiatives and further recommends the development of a gender mainstreaming framework that includes capacity building programmes and the appointment of a gender focal team.

9. Apart from that, the Government continues to engage with higher education institutes and universities to promote intellectual exchanges on women's issues and empower women through leadership and education. Engagements were also done with State Governments and agencies to ensure the implementation of gender equality efforts across Government agencies.

(v) What steps have been taken to promote decent paid care and domestic work in the public and private sectors?

10. The Government is currently in the early stages of a collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to find innovative means to reduce time and loss opportunities due to unpaid care. The findings of this project will be taken into consideration in developing the policy recommendation to address care work in Malaysia.

(vi) What actions and investments have been made to support gender-responsive social protection and care infrastructure and services?

11. The Government affirms that the care industry plays a significant part in increasing women's participation in the workforce. In this regard, efforts have been made to empower the care industry to support families, especially women, to participate actively in the workforce as their children are sent to the care centres. In addition, women who faced job displacements and those unable to operate businesses, mainly due to the movement control order (MCO) being imposed during the pandemic time, will be able to go to work, earn an income and contribute to the nation's economic development. Such efforts were also made to establish an industry that can create more job opportunities, especially for women from the most vulnerable group.

12. The Government also implements measures to support care industries, such as providing a one-off RM5,000 incentive to registered childcare operators and RM1,500 to home-based childcare centres. Tax exemptions up to RM3,000 were also given to set up childcare centres in the private sector's workplace. As for carers, RM9 million has been provided for the online PERMATA child care course.

13. Regarding gender-responsive social protection, the Government has launched a special programme to give an incentive for housewives to make retirement savings through the Employees Provident Fund Scheme Initiative for Housewives or i-SURI. The launch of i-SURI on 8 August 2018 is to create basic social security protection for housewives, who are highly exposed to the risk of sudden changes in the family. Currently, more than 100,000 participants have registered under the i-SURI scheme.

(vii) What specific measures have been implemented to promote women's entry, re-entry and advancement in the labour market?

14. The Government has mobilised the collaboration between several ministries, agencies and government-linked companies (GLCs) to introduce the Career Comeback Programme for Women in Cyber Risk Management to develop local cyber security talent. A pilot programme was initiated in September 2019 and ended in

March 2020, which saw that 26 women candidates were offered job opportunities in the cybersecurity industry.

(viii) What measures have been implemented to promote the transition from informal to formal paid employment for women?

15. In cognisant of the importance of technology, especially during the pandemic, the Government has allocated RM25 million, under the economic recovery programme, to train Malaysians to earn income as freelancers for jobs in the global digital economy through Global Online Workforce (GLOW). The Government has also emphasised and encouraged women entrepreneurs, to leverage and partake in various digital economy platforms through capacity building programmes run by many Government agencies and machineries and special grants and micro-credit facilities to support their digital-based businesses. This effort is made to ensure that women are not left behind in terms of digital technology empowerment.

(ix) What specific actions have been taken to support women's access to skills development and decent work in emerging fields, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics?

16. Apart from the attention given in developing local cyber security talent, the Government has also mobilised collaboration between ministries to promote meaningful, effective and equitable female participation in science, technology and innovation (STI) at all levels and in all sectors. This is part of the agenda under the National Policy on Science, Technology & Innovation (NPSTI) 2013-2020 to advance Malaysia towards a more competitive and competent nation built upon strong STI foundations.

(x) What efforts have been undertaken to encourage private firms and institutions to mainstream gender equality considerations in policies and practices?

17. The Government had implemented the policy of at least 30% Women in Decision Making Positions at All Levels in the Corporate Sector on 24 June 2011. The

policy is implemented on government-linked companies, public-listed companies, statutory bodies and financial institutions through the Malaysian Code of Corporate Governance. The policy also includes a monitoring mechanism in which the companies are required to disclose policies and targets with respect to the composition of women on their boards in their annual reports. In addition, growth in women's representation in the private sector could also be seen within the boardrooms of the top 100 public listed companies, with 26.5% women's representation recorded in 2019 as compared to 24.4% in 2018.

(xi) What action has been taken to increase investment and support for women entrepreneurs?

18. The Government is currently looking into empowering the socio-economic development of women, the elderly, the Bottom 40 per cent household income group (B40) and people with disabilities (PWDs) through entrepreneurship. This initiative will cover several areas, namely training and guidance, financing, market access, and data sharing.

19. In supporting women's involvement in e-business, the Government has also launched the MyKasih Kapital initiative, a capital injection of RM1,000 maximum for e-businesses or drop shippers to at least 2,000 qualified recipients.