



## **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

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MINISTER OF WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**PRAXIS 2023: Advancing Malaysia's Strategic Interests**

**Hilton Hotel, Kuala Lumpur  
24 October (Tuesday) / 9.00am**

*Updated 23 October 2023*

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh,  
Good morning.

**(SALUTATION)**

**SALUTATION LIST TO BE PROVIDED**

1. Firstly, allow me to thank the organisers, the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia for inviting me to deliver the keynote at this year's PRAXIS Conference.

## **THE STATE OF PLAY OF THE CARE ECONOMY**

2. As a start, allow me to draw your attention to the care economy.

3. The United Nations defines an ageing country where more than 7% of its people are over the age of 65. Last year, Malaysia became an ageing country, where 2.55 million Malaysians, or 7.5% of the country's population, are over the age of 65. This trend is poised to continue. By 2040, 14.5% of Malaysians will be over the age of 65, and a decade later in 2050, it is expected to reach 20% – resulting in Malaysia attaining “super-aged” nation status.

4. Therefore, we expect care needs will see an overall surge as Malaysia ages. At the same time, our labour force is shrinking and our old-age dependency ratio is set to increase from 7.2% in 2022 to 21.7% in 2040.
  
5. An additional problem is that many women leave the workforce due to care responsibilities, where it now stands at 55.8%, one of the lowest in ASEAN. While women make up 61% of the student number at universities, female

unemployed graduates composed of 54.2%, which is more than half of our skilled graduates.

6. These national level challenges are interrelated and Malaysia as a whole need to address and develop the care economy. We need a comprehensive strategy that recognises the value of care in our economy.

## **Care as a matter of national strategic interest**

Distinguished delegates,

7. Why is addressing care is a matter of our strategic interest?

Care work is the backbone of our societies as it ensures the health and welfare of dependents. This includes the most vulnerable in our society: children, the elderly, the ill and the disabled. Ensuring that these dependents can receive accessible, affordable and high-quality care services is of

paramount importance for our social security moving forward.

8. Care work also facilitates labour and productivity, allowing those of us with dependents to continue participating in the workforce, promoting access to job security, social protection and income over the lifetime. With women making up the bulk of the elderly, it is ever more important their participation in the workforce in their work-age years is sustained for a more secure future in old age.



9. Further to that, care work, which forms the care economy, stands to be a productive sector for our national economy. If properly regulated, care work can potentially contribute between 10 to 39% of our GDP – offering a clear indication of the contributions this sector will provide to our economy.
  
10. How then do we move forward? The first step to recognising care is to regulate and professionalise care work. Regulation will ensure that standards of care and safety are met. The Ministry is already making strides towards this, with a push for

caregivers to undergo training courses. For dependents, professionalising care work can result in better quality of care. At the same time, it will teach them skills that is transferable to the care market, and attract more workers to the care economy while also improving training and skills over the long run.

11. Aside from that ongoing efforts are child carers training and policy reviews, as well as to establish a database for

registered child carers. This will assure parents that their children are being cared for in a safe environment.

12. These are just some of the initiatives that the Ministry is taking to build the foundations of a care economy in this country. By boosting the supply of caregivers and the quality of care, it will alleviate the burden placed on informal caregivers, allowing them to rejoin the workforce should they choose to.

13. This is aligned with the country's target to boost women's workforce participation to 60% in the next decade, from 55.8% in 2022 – as announced by our Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim during the mid-term review of the 12th Malaysia Plan.

14. To better facilitate women's participation in the labour force, the government will continue to implement the MamaCare, affordable daycare, Career Comeback, and nursery fee subsidies at work programmes. Further, my Ministry will be

focusing on better policies and law, an ecosystem to support women and training, capacity building as well as upskilling and reskilling to ensure that we achieve that 60% target.

15. But of course, more needs to be done to build the foundations of a care economy. Doing so will require a whole-of-society effort that recognises both its intrinsic and economic value to our lives. I welcome the ideas that will be discussed today in hopes of creating a more equitable and productive future for all Malaysians.

## Conclusion

Distinguished delegates,

16. To be sure, the multifaceted challenges associated with the care economy, along with the other three topics up for discussion today will require multistakeholder participation to be comprehensively and sustainably addressed.

17. While these challenges may be daunting, I am buoyed with confidence seeing a full hall of participants readily and eagerly contributing their time and knowledge to identify potential policy solutions.

18. On my part at the Ministry – I eagerly await the results of today's conference and look forward towards concrete public policy solutions to advance Malaysia's strategic interests.

Thank you.