

**Report on the International Corporate Women Summit  
"Women in Business and Management"  
30 August 2013 ❖ Hotel Istana Kuala Lumpur**

**Welcoming Remarks by Puan Sri Datin Seri Dr Susan SC Cheah, Director, Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute**

Puan Sri Datin Seri Dr Cheah began by warmly welcoming delegates to the International Corporate Women Summit. She then introduced the purpose of the summit, which was to encourage and empower corporate women to aim for the top by firstly providing them with practical tools and guidance to help themselves, and secondly creating suitably conducive environment for them so that factors beyond their control do not hinder them. She also called for delegates to commit to helping each other, including the gentlemen present to unite and strive together to unleash the full potential of the female workforce in order to complement the male workforce.

**Opening Keynote Address on "Empowering Women to Advance in Business and Management: How Do We Make It Happen?" by YB Datuk Rohani Abdul Karim, Minister, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development Malaysia**

YB Datuk Rohani began by emphasising on women being a valuable asset for the nation not just economically, but also socially and politically.

She then delved into the various initiatives spearheaded by the government to empower women to advance in business and management. The key objective is to achieve 30% representation of women in decision-making positions. The Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development through the NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women (NIEW) has been actively driving this aim forward with the women directorship initiative. The Ministry has also hosted various networking opportunities including "The Women's Summit 2013" which saw 1,400 professionals participating.

Given that the intake for women in Malaysia's higher education institutions has consistently exceeded 62%, there should be a sufficient pool of talented women in the country eligible to move further up the corporate ladder.

She then went on to highlight that the major hurdle faced by women in advancing their careers is the social and cultural stereotyping of women. Society expects females to be subservient to males, and consequently curb their leadership and decision-making skills from young. Furthermore, despite having a busy and successful career, a woman is still expected to handle the lion's share of domestic responsibilities.

The government is trying to address this issue through national programmes to emphasise on more equitable sharing of domestic responsibilities between husbands and wives, as well as promulgating flexible work arrangements for women. Examples include the "flexWorkLife.my" initiative by the Ministry and Talent Corporation to link employers offering flexible working arrangements with employees seeking them, and "Life at Work Awards" for employers who promote diversity and assist female employees to achieve work-life balance and success at work.

**SESSION ONE – LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK: HOW FAR HAVE WOMEN ADVANCED IN BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT?**

**Moderator: Ms Ng Yeen Seen, Senior Vice President and Chief Strategy and Programme Officer, Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute; and Director, Centre for Public Policy Studies**

Ms Ng briefly introduced the speakers and outlined the topic and framework for discussions.

**Panellist: Ms Alicia Yi, Managing Director, Asia Pacific Consumer Market, Korn/Ferry International**

Ms Yi focused her presentation in the area of board composition, highlighting strategies and lessons to achieving diversity on the board.

She began by showcasing women's history over the past 100 years, which had been very much about breaking down barriers in politics, design, entertainment, business and many other fields. She noted that women have made fantastic progress, and emphasised that it is women before her that had made it possible for her to achieve success today.

At the entry level stage, the work-force is evenly balanced with approximately 50% male and 50% female. However, progressing towards the C-suite and boardroom, there are only about 5% female remaining. The big question is "What happened in between?"

She then spoke about the need for the current generation of women to "lean-in" and advocated for a transparent diversity policy to be developed and implemented similar to that practised in Australia, which had recorded significant success. Without the backing of pro-active policy, it is next to impossible to make change happen.

In concluding, she urged women to step up to the plate and take responsibility to make things happen to propel themselves and other women forward.

**Panellist: Dato' Dr Nellie SL Tan-Wong, Co-Founder and Honorary Chief Executive Officer, Women's Institute of Management Kuala Lumpur**

Dato' Dr Tan-Wong focused her presentation on key success factors and tips to encourage women to boldly step up to the challenge of advancing their career to the C-level.

She used various prominent women both locally and internationally as examples, including Datuk Yvonne Chia, former Group Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Hong Leong Bank Berhad; Ms Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer of Facebook; and Ms Marissa Mayer, President and Chief Executive Officer of Yahoo!

Her points touched on the Malaysian government's initiative to create a registry for women who want to become directors, and the difference between male and female leadership which pointed to the need for more female leaders in order to achieve more balanced leadership.

**Panellist: Datuk Wira Jalilah Baba, Chairman, Crewstone International Sdn Bhd**

Datuk Wira Jalilah focused her presentation on the role of policy in advancing women to the C-suite.

She began by praising the government's pro-active policy of requiring 30% representation of women in decision-making positions, which obliged companies to start looking for capable women to fulfil the requirement. She then highlighted examples of companies that have stepped up to embrace this policy and enjoyed improved bottom-line as a result to prove her point that women have valuable contributions to make economically hence their strengths should be tapped into for the benefit of the nation.

**Panellist: Her Excellency Judith St George, High Commissioner of Canada to Malaysia, Canadian High Commission**

Her Excellency St George focused her presentation on Canada's efforts and achievements in promoting the advancement of women into decision-making positions not just in the corporate world but also in the political arena.

She shared on opportunities that women in the West generally and Canada specifically enjoyed. However, despite all these opportunities we cannot declare victory as women are still underrepresented. She then also elaborated on the feminisation of progress. In addition, she touched on the role of civil society and that of women themselves to network and mentor.

In concluding, she advanced three points or prerequisites that are necessary in order to advance women, namely political inclusiveness, economic equality and personal autonomy.

**Panellist: Ms Noormah Mohd Noor, Chief Executive Officer, Express Rail Link Sdn Bhd**

Ms Noormah focused her presentation on women in the transportation industry and shared ERL's best practices to encourage and assist women to advance in the industry.

She started by highlighting the 10<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan's focus to increase women's participation in the workforce, especially in decision-making positions. Currently, less than 50% of women in the Malaysian are able to take advantage of programmes in their work place to help them advance in their careers and at the same time achieve work-life balance. She emphasised on the need to create a supportive environment, which could be done through offering flexible working arrangements.

She then stressed on the importance of building up a critical mass of women in decision-making positions in order to make change happen in a significant way. She encouraged delegates by showcasing examples of success in the local transportation industry including herself; Ms Aireen Omar, Chief Executive Officer of Air Asia; and Ms Noorizah Abdul Hamid, Managing Director of PLUS Expressways. She also shared ERL's corporate commitment as well as best practices to promote the advancement of women.

**SESSION TWO – PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE**

**Moderator: Mr Johan Mahmood Merican, Chief Executive Officer, Talent Corporation Malaysia**

Mr Johan Mahmood briefly introduced the panellists and then framed the topic of discussion before proceeding to explain about the format that he would be conducting the session in, which required the panellists to share their personal stories or that of their organisations.

**Panellist: Her Excellency Maria I. Rendon, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Embassy of the Argentine Republic**

Her Excellency Rendon focused her presentation on her personal journey to becoming an ambassador, highlighting the challenges she faced along the way and how she overcame them.

She explained that diplomacy in Argentina was usually the restricted domain of well-connected families even though a public examination was the mandatory requirement to joining the public service. She urged delegates to be bold and daring, highlighting that there are moments in life when one just have to be daring to go further. She illustrated this principle using her own experience. No one had wanted to apply for an opening at one particular embassy because the ambassador had a bad reputation but she applied for it. Although that stint was very difficult, it was also very rewarding.

In concluding, she called for wider gender representation in the foreign services not just in Argentina but also around the world.

**Panellist: Ms Nora Abd Manaf, Senior Executive Vice President and Head, Group Human Capital, Maybank**

Ms Nora focused her presentation on the biases that are holding female leaders back, and shared Maybank's relatively successful experience in addressing these biases.

She began by highlighting that there are two degrees of biases, namely blatant biases and second generation biases, which are unintentional biases. She called for blatant biases to be arrested at its roots and shared Maybank's transformation programme for its talent management framework to ensure inclusiveness and equality. The most notable initiatives under the transformation programme were flexible working arrangements; supportive child care culture; merit based panel decisions; diversity tracking in its Executive Committee and Board; as well as mentoring and special forums.

**Panellist: Ms Pauline Ho, Assurance Leader, PricewaterhouseCoopers**

Ms Ho focused her presentation on her personal journey to success, which highlighted the important contributions made by her sponsors and mentors.

She urged delegates to work hard, and emphasised that her mentors were mostly men. They helped her by finding opportunities for her and also by taking personal interest in her development. They provided her with opportunities to work overseas including in London to develop and hone her talents, and they also made sure that she got out of her comfort zone.

Reflecting that her roles at work and at home are both very taxing, she noted that she tries very hard to be flexible in order to fit everything in and has consciously given up 'me' time as well as thrown the notion of work-life balance out the window.

**Panellist: Professor Christine Ennew, Provost and Chief Executive Officer, The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus**

Professor Ennew too focused her presentation on her personal journey to success and called on women take advantage of "tokenism" rather than be offended by it. She also touched on the government's role in ensuring gender equality.

She started by sharing her personal background, relating on how she had been the first in her family to go to university but was not able to secure a job after graduation hence continued with her PhD and finally ended up with a career in academia.

Although she had a sense of direction about where she wanted to progress to in her career, she did not formulate detailed plans. She credited her success to her willingness to learn and her responsiveness to opportunities as well as supportive and encouraging superiors. She then went on to share about how she benefited from "tokenism" by making use of the opportunities given to her as a woman in a token position to learn about the diverse set of jobs as an academic and a university manager.

Next, she talked about the importance of gender equality framed within both the moral argument and the economic argument. Then she touched on the government's roles in actively preventing discrimination and promoting equality of opportunities and treatment through legislation, as well as in addressing the problem of labour market segmentation.

**Panellist: Ms Rejina Rahim, Managing Director and Deputy Regional Head of Marketing Asia Pacific ex Japan, Nomura Asset Management Malaysia Sdn Bhd**

Ms Rejina also focused her presentation on her personal journey to success, which highlighted the importance of solid support both at home and at work.

She attributed her success to supportive parents and husband as well as bosses. She went into asset management by chance because of the Asian Financial Crisis, and has never looked back since.

She is currently the only female managing an overseas office for Nomura Asset Management. The character traits necessary for success in her opinion are tenacity and the willingness to do more than the expected requirements. She had always asked for more from her bosses, and in her previous job at Khazanah she had come to be known as a bulldog amongst her bosses.

### **SESSION THREE – OVERCOMING TENDENCIES TO STEREOTYPE WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE**

#### **Moderator: Datuk Seri Mohamed Iqbal Rawther, Chairman, Malaysian Institute of Management**

Datuk Seri Mohamed Iqbal introduced the speakers and also himself before explaining briefly about the topic to be discussed. He also took the opportunity to highlight that stereotypes happen to everyone and not specifically to women only.

#### **Panellist: Dr Beth Yam Wei Yin, Senior Staff Technologist, Intel Malaysia**

Dr Beth focused her presentation on Intel's experience with stereotyping, which highlighted what Intel has been doing to address the gap between females taking technical courses in institutions of higher learning and females actually holding technical jobs.

She began by sharing briefly about Intel in Malaysia, which started in 1972 with 100 employees and has since grown to more than 9000 employees. She then delved into Intel's experience with stereotyping. Being an employer in the technical area, Intel's ratio of female to male employees is approximately 10-12:100 so the big question for it would be "Where are the technical females?" considering that the enrolment for Science, Mathematics and Computer courses in institutions of higher learning in Malaysia comprise of 52% females.

Intel's current baseline for female technical employees stood at 31% which is higher than the industry average of 25%. This relatively better achievement can be attributed to Intel's proactive actions of extending flexibility to its employees and creating a women friendly working environment including providing a convenience store within its compound for convenient grocery shopping, designated parking for pregnant staff and a mother's room for nursing mothers.

In conclusion, she emphasised on the importance of blending the working environment to match women's needs, and also touched on the importance of purposeful mentoring which turns mentors into sponsors for women.

#### **Panellist: Ms Elizabeth Lee Fuh Yen, Senior Executive Director and Chairperson, Sunway University**

Ms Lee focused her presentation on highlighting the various stereotyping challenges faced by women and called for companies to provide more opportunities for women.

She began by highlighting the statistics that only 4.2% of Fortune 500 companies have women CEOs. In Malaysia, female employment rate stood at 49.5% out of which only 14.8% were at the professional level.

The stereotypes segregating males and females are many but can generally be classified into these categories – physical stereotype, personality trait stereotype, role stereotype, occupational stereotype and sexuality stereotype. Stereotypes are dangerous in that it inhibits women from achieving real progress and may pit women against women. This is aptly reflected by a typical

stereotype on women leaders: "If I put a woman in the role and if she fails, it will set back all women."

In conclusion, she called for more opportunities for women, citing that the female talent pool is available given that women outnumber men in institutions of higher learning and that the attainment of higher education increases women's presence in the workforce.

**Panellist: Professor Datin Dr Quek Ai Hwa, Professorial Chair of Career Development, HELP University**

Professor Datin Dr Quek focused her presentation on insights into the stereotypic expectations of girls and women and its accompanying challenges, and offered advice to address it.

She began by highlighting the benefits of gender and cultural diversity at the workplace which included aiding in the social transformation of the country, improving national productivity as well as improving the holistic psychological wellness of society. She then provided her insights into the stereotypic expectations of women and the accompanying challenges it posed especially on the younger generation. She also stressed on the importance of shaping how young girls think of their future.

Next she offered advice to women to overcome those challenges. Proven methods include current trends in reconciling work and family such as flexible working arrangements; and also developing cross-cultural competencies and adaption for career development.

In concluding, she urged women to be more proactive in developing their coping capacities in order to meet their career development needs.

**Panellist: Dr Pimrapa Dusadeeisariyakul, Project Manager, Friedrich Naumann Stiftung**

Dr Dusadeeisariyakul focused her presentation on the causes of stereotyping and ways of addressing these causes, using the scenario in Thailand as illustration.

She began by outlining the situation in Thailand where women have 38% representation in boards but are still not able to escape the clutches of stereotyping as 36% of the women in senior management roles are confined to being human resource directors, chief financial officers and sales directors.

She then went on to address the common barriers women face including the tendency to underestimate themselves, and offered advice on collaborating to overcome gender stereotyping at the workplace and making connections to the decision-making circles in their organisations in order to advance themselves.

Then she explored the causes of stereotyping at the workplace and highlighted that such stereotypes were formed in childhood from the school and home environments, being greatly influenced and enforced by parents, close relatives, teachers and the media. To prove her point, she utilised visual imageries to engage and elicit responses from the audience.

Lastly, she offered ways of dealing with these causes which should begin by minimising women's inferiority complex, then move on to encouraging gender equality and freedom in all professional endeavours and during the formative years of childhood.

**SESSION FOUR – WORKSHOPS ON POLICIES, ISSUES AND PRACTICES TO PROMOTE THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT**

This session was formatted as facilitated roundtable discussions to engage delegates and encourage them to share their thoughts and experiences.

There were three topics of discussion, which were conducted over three rounds of ten minutes each. In the first round, delegates were divided into three groups and assigned to a topic. For the second and third rounds respectively, delegates moved to the next table/topic. This format ensured that every delegate was able to participate in all three topics of discussion.

#### **TOPIC A – MENTORING, TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMMES**

- **Facilitator 1: Ms Jenny Ooi, Senior Human Resources Director, Agilent Technologies Microwave Products (M) Sdn Bhd**
- **Facilitator 2: Mr Paul W Chan, Deputy President, Malaysian Alliance of Corporate Directors**

#### **TOPIC B – ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT SUCH AS AFFINITY PROGRAMMES, SUPPORT GROUPS AND NETWORKING CHANNELS**

- **Facilitator 1: Ms Jacqueline Francis, Group Chief Executive Officer, AJA EQS International Sdn Bhd**
- **Facilitator 2: Mr Jonathan Yong, Centre for Public Policy Studies**

#### **TOPIC C – WORK-LIFE BALANCE INCLUDING STEMMING THE LOSS OF TALENT FROM WOMEN OPTING FOR A SABBATICAL AS WELL AS HELPING THOSE RETURNING FROM A SABBATICAL TO READJUST THEMSELVES**

- **Facilitator 1: Ms Lynda Lim, Senior Policy Analyst, Centre for Public Policy Studies**
- **Facilitator 2: Puan Sri Datin Seri Dr Susan SC Cheah, Director, Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute; and Executive Committee Member, Sunway Group**

At the end of this session, the facilitators for each topic summarised the discussions that had taken place over the three rounds at their respective tables into key takeaways for presentation in Session Five.

#### **SESSION FIVE – PIECING THE PUZZLE: SHARING KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE WORKSHOPS**

**Moderator: Ms Ng Yeen Seen, Senior Vice President and Chief Strategy and Programme Officer, Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute; and Director, Centre for Public Policy Studies**

Ms Ng briefly introduced the panellists, then went on to explain the format of the session which would begin with the workshop facilitators presenting the key takeaways for Topics A, B and C respectively. Thereafter, the remaining panellists would share their thoughts by adding on to those key takeaways.

**Panellist: Ms Jenny Ooi, Senior Human Resources Director, Agilent Technologies Microwave Products (M) Sdn Bhd**

Ms Ooi presented the key takeaways from "Topic A – Mentoring, Training and Education Programmes."

The workshop discussions focused mainly on mentoring. Participants valued it as an important tool for developing skills and solving issues as well as creating awareness of advancement opportunities. They agreed that mentoring can be applied internally within an organisation or

even externally across organisations. Talent Corporation was cited as an exemplary organisation offering not just mentoring and training, but also supportive environment in the form of childcare.

There was also general consensus that policy is very important in pushing forward this agenda of advancing women in business and management. The facilitators advocated on the need to continue speaking up at every possible opportunity and also to utilise technology as our ally.

The most important output from this topic was the call for wider use of mentoring and sponsoring to help women develop their skills and their ability to resolve issues, as well as to take advantage of opportunities both inside and outside their organisations. To facilitate this, another call was made for greater utilisation of technology as well as for more supportive working environment especially in the area of childcare to ease the burden on women who are also mothers. This group would not be able to fully take advantage of mentoring and sponsoring without the support necessary to meet their critical domestic needs.

**Panellist: Ms Jacqueline Francis, Group Chief Executive Officer, AJA EQS International Sdn Bhd**

Ms Francis presented the key takeaways from "Topic B – Assistance and Support such as Affinity Programmes, Support Groups and Networking Channels."

Participants were requested to ponder over whether support groups and networking were sufficient means for helping them to advance their careers to the C-level. The consensus amongst participants was that there were not many support groups or networks here in Malaysia tailored to meet the needs of corporate women, and the little available were concentrated in the Klang Valley hence women in other parts of the country were neglected.

The most important output from this topic was the call for creating more support groups and networks in Malaysia that are focused towards meeting the needs of corporate women in different stages of their lives who are located in different places nationwide. These groups and networks must be focus-driven, relevant, and accessible.

**Panellist: Puan Sri Datin Seri Dr Susan SC Cheah, Director, Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute; and Executive Committee Member, Sunway Group**

Puan Sri Datin Seri Dr Cheah presented the key takeaways from "Topic C – Work-Life Balance Including Stemming the Loss of Talent from Women Opting for a Sabbatical as well as Helping Those Returning from a Sabbatical to Readjust Themselves."

Participants were taken through the DOME methodology – Diagnostics their problem, clarifying their Objective or goal, analysing the Method they used, and Evaluating its effectiveness. Various suggestions were collated to help women achieve work-life balance including flexible working environment, domestic help, child-pooling system, recruiting and rewarding neighbourhood childcare volunteers, and training staff to be able to work from home. Other important factors cited by many participants were having understanding and supportive spouses as well as strong self-discipline and strong social network.

The general consensus amongst participants was that work-life balance is very subjective and would mean different things to different people, and men too need work-life balance. Advocacy that is gender sensitised to recognise women's unique needs would be essential to help corporate women advance further in their careers. Towards this end, a change of mind-set is required. We need to start thinking of work-life integration instead of work-life balance as both can no longer be mutually exclusive.

The most important output from this topic was the call for greater gender sensitised advocacy that recognises women's unique needs, in order to change mind-sets at every level to focus on

work-life integration rather than work-life balance. Companies need to be more understanding of their employees and be willing to offer flexibility but at the same time employees need to prove themselves as disciplined and responsible to their companies.

**Panellist: Ms Anne Marie Brooks, Executive Director, American Malaysian Chamber of Commerce**

Ms Brooks' main points were for women to look for role-models as an alternative to mentors and sponsors, and for a proper mentoring system to be put in place so as to reach more women.

She pointed out that not many organisations provide flexibility, or the opportunity to benefit from mentoring or sponsorship. Another viable option would be for women to look for role-models after whom they could model their personal life and work life in order to achieve work-life integration.

In her opinion, for mentoring or sponsoring to be effective, a proper system needs to be developed and implemented so that more women could be reached. They must be aware of the opportunities in order to benefit from it.

**Panellist: Hajjah Ainon Haji Kuntom, Chairman, MRP Advisory Services Sdn Bhd; and Director, Yayasan Jantung Malaysia**

Hajjah Ainon's main point was for women to be aware of their own capabilities and put more importance on their own health and well-being. She emphasised that success should not come at the expense of a woman's personal health and happiness.

She raised the issue of a major hurdle faced by women of her generation which was encapsulated aptly by the phrase "Women are to be seen but not heard." We need to create awareness not just amongst women but also amongst men in order to address this issue in a more holistic and comprehensive manner.

Also, women need to be aware of their own ability physically, mentally and emotionally, especially their health. In today's context, it is not necessary to sacrifice personal life in order to achieve success. Women can enjoy success in both family life and career life. The prerequisite for it is having a strong support system.

**Panellist: Professor Glenda Crosling, Senior Academic Advisor, Sunway University**

Professor Crosling's main points were for women to work towards success by being proactive in networking and seeking sponsors or mentors as she equated success with independence for women, and for policies to encourage diversity and gender neutrality in the workplace which would be extremely helpful to women aiming for greater career advancement.

She agreed that flexibility at work is very important, but for the concept of "working from home" to be effective, objective KPIs must be set and the employee must be accountable and responsible. She also acknowledged that networking plays a very important role in connecting women to the upper echelons in their respective organisations and industries who can be their role-models and perhaps even mentors or sponsors. In this connection, she urged women to be proactive in seeking mentors and sponsors for themselves.

She further noted that women need to be independent. Being successful in their careers would contribute towards their independence. Reliance on relationships would not be wise as relationships can fail them. Furthermore, good quality child-care centres are an essential form of support. Policies to encourage diversity and gender neutrality would be very helpful too, and so would tax incentives for child-care.

## **SUMMARY OF CALLS ISSUED FROM THE WORKSHOPS**

- **TOPIC A – MENTORING, TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMMES**

The call issued from this topic was for wider use of mentoring and sponsoring to help women develop their skills and their ability to resolve issues, as well as to take advantage of opportunities both inside and outside their organisations. To facilitate this, another call was made for greater utilisation of technology and for more supportive working environment especially in the area of childcare to ease the burden on women who are also mothers. This group would not be able to fully take advantage of mentoring and sponsoring without the support necessary to meet their critical domestic needs.

- **TOPIC B – ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT SUCH AS AFFINITY PROGRAMMES, SUPPORT GROUPS AND NETWORKING CHANNELS**

The call issued from this topic was for the creation of more support groups and networks in Malaysia that are focused towards meeting the needs of corporate women in different stages of their lives who are located in different places nationwide. These groups and networks must be focus-driven, relevant, and accessible.

- **TOPIC C – WORK-LIFE BALANCE INCLUDING STEMMING THE LOSS OF TALENT FROM WOMEN OPTING FOR A SABBATICAL AS WELL AS HELPING THOSE RETURNING FROM A SABBATICAL TO READJUST THEMSELVES**

The call issued from this topic was for greater gender sensitised advocacy that recognises women's unique needs, in order to change mindsets at every level to focus on work-life integration rather than work-life balance. Companies need to be more understanding of their employees and be willing to offer flexibility but at the same time employees need to prove themselves as disciplined and responsible to their companies.