

**OFFICIAL ADDRESS
BY
YB DATO' SRI ROHANI ABDUL KARIM
MINISTER OF WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
AT THE
REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION:
TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED SYSTEMS APPROACH
ON
24 MARCH 2015
AT
MARRIOT HOTEL, PUTRAJAYA**

[SALUTATIONS]

Yang Berhormat Datin Paduka Chew Mei Fun
Timbalan Menteri Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat

Yang Berbahagia Dato' Sabariah Hassan
Ketua Setiausaha
Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat

Ms. Wivina Belmonte
Representative UNICEF di Malaysia

Yang Berbahagia Datuk Seri Halim Shafie
Pengerusi
Suruhanjaya Komunikasi dan Multimedia Malaysia

Yang Berbahagia Tan Sri-Tan Sri, Datuk-Datuk, Datin-Datin, para
Perwakilan Negara-negara ASEAN dan Serantau, Tuan-Tuan, Puan-
puan dan rakan media yang saya hormati.

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakaatuh dan Salam 1Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

Terlebih dahulu saya memanjatkan kesyukuran ke hadrat ilahi kerana dengan limpah kurnia dan izinnya kita dapat bersama-sama dalam *Regional Conference on Child Online Protection* (RCCOP) dengan temanya “*Towards an Integrated Systems Approach*” pada pagi yang mulia ini. Selamat datang diucapkan, ‘Kecil tapak tangan, Nyiru saya tadahkan’ dengan kehadiran Yang Berbahagia Tan Sri-Tan Sri, Datuk-Datuk, Datin-Datin, para Perwakilan Negara-negara ASEAN dan Serantau, Tuan-Tuan dan Puan-puan serta para delegasi antarabangsa ke persidangan ini.

Izinkan saya untuk meneruskan ucapan saya dalam Bahasa Inggeris.

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen;

I am indeed delighted to be here this morning to officiate the opening of the *Regional Conference on Child Online Protection*. It is my privilege to bid *Selamat Datang* and a warm welcome to Malaysia to all our foreign delegates and everyone to the Regional Conference on Child Online Protection.

COLLABORATION

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) and UNICEF Malaysia for the close collaboration in funding and organising this conference. This collaboration also encompasses several programs which were held prior to this conference namely the Child Online

Protection Preparatory Workshops on 7 and 14 March 2015 at Wisma UN and Forum on Children for a Better Digital World on 23 March 2015 in Putrajaya.

My deepest appreciation also goes to Ms. Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (SRSG) on her support and motivated message which has been delivered through the video just now.

OBJECTIVES

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen;

Access to knowledge, participation, leisure and play are fundamental rights of all children, as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). However, the convention in particular to Article 17 refers to access to information by children and protection from “information and material injurious to his or her well-being”. The Internet, mobile phones and other electronic media offer opportunities for these rights to be fulfilled, as they provide children and young people with unprecedented levels of access to information, culture, communication and entertainment.

We often remind our children on safety issues like “*do not talk to strangers*” or “*do not give out information to strangers*”. However, the convergence of technology and applications resulting in the ‘new media’ is challenging traditional content regulatory regimes. The internet is an open global space, and technology is being exploited for criminal activities for huge profits and in more advanced ways.

As a follow up to these issues, the principal objective of this conference is to discuss and share experiences on how the internet and related online activities can best be used as a vital information source for children while at the same time, ensuring that children are protected from related risks and vulnerability. Apart from that, sharing best practices and challenges within the region and beyond, on keeping children and young people safe when they are online are also additional objectives of this conference.

BOON AND BANE

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen;

Access to Internet is an indicator to measure a nation's advancement into the knowledge-based economy. It creates a new form of communication where information is exchanged with great speed but less cost. It creates a new platform for business where goods and services can be offered, exchange, sell or buy in the cyber-market. But there is also the dark side of the Internet where unscrupulous people use it for cyber pornography and prostitution. And the dark side also includes those who target the children as their victims.

Therefore, protecting children online becomes a global challenge which requires a global approach by multi stakeholders. There were and still are many ongoing efforts around the world to tackle the issue of child online protection. Hence, UNICEF and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for example, had released Guidelines for Industry on Child Online Protection in 2014 while the UN agency has

appointed the First Lady of Nigeria to champion the child online protection in 2013. In addition, ITU member states adopted the Resolution 179 (Guadalajara, 2010) which encourages ITU to continue its child online protection initiative, to raise awareness and educate people on the dangers of cyberspace. As a state member to ITU, Malaysia together with other 191 member states from time to time have been involved and given updated information on global issues, policies and guidelines related to communication technology.

Among the action taken by these member states include among others:

- i. a joint meeting with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) held by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2009 on promoting a safer Internet Environment for children. The OECD is currently preparing a report on the protection of children online with the main objective to enhance mutual understanding of policy approaches to the protection of children online;
- ii. the establishment of non-profit social partnership, *Smart Online Safe Offline (SOSO) in Australia* to educate children about cyber bullying and stranger danger;
- iii. the establishment of United Kingdom Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) with over 200 members and a Board which includes three government Ministers, law enforcement, the Internet Watch Foundation, academia, charities, parenting groups and elected members from industry and other NGOs; and

- iv. the Safer Internet Programme, under the framework of the European Commission and co-funded by the European Union to facilitate a safer Internet, to raise awareness of risks to children online and to combat abuse. This multi-stakeholder project represents a network of NGOs, law enforcement bodies, and academic institutions who are committed in making the Internet a safer place for children.

Within the Malaysian setting, DiGi as our smart partner in child online protection has also organised a “*DiGi Cybersafe Programme*” for schools and Pusat Internet 1Malaysia in 2012. The program which consists of guidebooks, awareness workshops, educational games and online resources aims to scale up the awareness of risks and threats online, teach children on how to stay safe online and guide for parents to provide a safe environment for family friendly internet experiences.

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen;

RISKS

The internet is an integral part of young people’s everyday lives. They use it either to express themselves for entertainment or education, to stay in touch with friends or to get access to various kind of information.

According to the report on Exploring the Digital Landscape in Malaysia which was issued in 2014 by UNICEF Voices of Youth, social networking makes up approximately one-third of PC ‘screen time’ in Malaysia and almost 92% of web users in the country visit a social networking site in 2013. In 2013, Malaysia ranked in the top 15 countries with the highest

Facebook penetration at 82.3%, behind the Philippines (92%) and Thailand (89%) in the region. Children and young people aged 13-24 make up nearly half of Facebook users in this country. According to the statistics issued by MCMC, up to the third quarter (Q3) of 2014, there were 67.8% of households with broadband access while 16.5% of users were children.

I would like to also draw your attention to the report on CyberSAFE in Schools' survey which was conducted in schools last year. This survey report is based on a study involving 13,945 Malaysian school children. The study examined several dimensions of internet-related behaviour: online safety, cyber-bullying, support networks and personal concerns.

The following are some of the key findings which all of us **MUST** take note:

- I. **High risk factor #1:** Although more than 80% of those surveyed view online safety as important, there still remain around 40% of children who do not know how to protect themselves on the internet.
- II. **High risk factor #2:** 83% of children do not undertake a broad range of actions to protect themselves on the internet, with 30% of them reporting that they either take no action at all or take only one action toward online safety.
- III. **High risk factor #3:** The survey reveals that 45% of all school children exercise low levels of online safety. Despite this, 52% say that they feel safe on the internet. Another 38% are unaware of the need to safeguard themselves on the internet.

On the other hand, Norton Online Family Report 2013 has also stated that almost 82% of children who breached the Internet general rules (Internet safety house rules) experienced negative moments online while 6% of parents claimed they did not know of their children's activities online. On the same note, 12% of children admitted they have surfed porn website when their parents were not around. This scenario indirectly has impacted negatively towards their emotions and mind development.

Obviously, the risk of these children to be exposed to the negative norms and cyber threats is very high since it can happen to anybody, anywhere. However, we cannot deny we need to allow children to use the Internet because of the amount of educational material that is available online. Therefore, guidance and monitoring from parents, guardians, teachers and community members are of utmost important to avoid the unwanted incidents. This will become our biggest challenge which must be tackled by each of us here.

CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen;

Despite of the existing laws to control the issues related to cyber world and information and communication technology, there was no in-depth efforts to focus on the child online protection. Taking cognizance of this, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development with the engagement of various relevant ministries, agencies and Government

departments have developed a Plan of Action on Child Online Protection (PTCOP).

This PTCOP which was tabled and approved by the Cabinet on 11 February 2015 will be officially handed over to the lead ministries/agencies of PTCOP to be implemented. Among the lead ministries/agencies are MWFCD, Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government, Ministry of Home Affairs, MCMC, Malaysian Royal Police, Attorney-General's Chamber, Department of Social Welfare and National Population and Family Development Board.

It is hoped that this PTCOP with its 4 main objectives and 20 strategies based on 4 aspects namely; advocacy, prevention, intervention and support service will be the catalyst in increasing the awareness and commitment of parents, teachers, community members and NGOs. This will also enable all stakeholders to develop a clear continuum of advocacy, prevention and early intervention and protective programmes that comply with international standards relating to child online protection.

CONCLUSION

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen;

Investing in children is investing in the future of the country. Children are vibrant members of the society and are the pulse of the nation's aspirations to achieve the high income nation status by 2020. I personally would like to call upon all parents, teachers, NGOs and civil

society, join me in protecting our children from online threats. Together we can ensure that the Internet environment is safe for all children to use. With this, **I declare the Regional Conference on Child Online Protection with the theme “Towards an Integrated Systems Approach” open.**

Thank you and Wassalamu ‘Alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

**Policy Division
Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development.**

24 March 2014