

Opening of Australia Awards Short Course Leadership Development for Islamic Women Makassar 14 August 2017

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Participants in the Australia Awards short course Leadership
Development for Islamic Women

Ladies and gentlemen

Assalamualaikum warrahmatulahi wabarakatuh

Om Swastiastu

Shalom

Salam sejahtera kepada kita semua,

G'day!

- I am very proud to be associated with this course, which we hope will help strengthen women's leadership in Indonesia
 - and also build even stronger relations between Australia and Indonesia.
- In our societies today recognising equality and striving to achieve it, and striving to overcome barriers to progress for all groups in society, is a sign of true leadership.
- And many modern organisations have realised that equality for women and empowerment of women leaders, is vital for their organisational success.
- For any modern organisation the key to success is the quality of its people
 - ensuring all staff have the opportunity to reach their full potential is important in today's highly competitive world
 - if an organisation can achieve this, it will perform at its best
 - if a country can achieve this, it will outperform others.
- So Australia has consistently striven to support gender equality and women's empowerment domestically, and in its overseas programs.
- In Australia though, we still recognise our limitations

- in DFAT for example, less than a third of our senior executives are women
- and only 26 per cent of our Ambassadors and Consuls-General are women
- only about 35 per cent of applications for head of mission postings are from female applicants
- what is constraining our talented women from applying for more overseas positions?
- DFAT has many strategies to try and boost women's participation in the senior levels of the organisation
 - and we are certainly leading at a public level
 - our Foreign Minister and our Secretary-General are women
 - we conduct a range of courses for managers on topics such as “mitigating unconscious bias”
 - we have flexible work arrangements that are designed to make life easier for young mothers, carers, and those who prefer to work part-time for family reasons
 - these programs of course benefit men as well as women
 - DFAT's goal is to create a workplace where all staff can thrive equally, and where we can use the skills and talents of all our staff.

Ladies and gentlemen

- I want to share a little about my own journey towards realising equality is good for all of us, and the realisation that only through equality can we build a better society.
- I grew up in a traditional Anglo-Australian family as the first-born son
 - I was expected to go to university, get a job, become a breadwinner
 - there was no direct pressure, but that was what my family expected
 - I graduated from university, met and married a wonderful woman, became a breadwinner, and joined DFAT ambitious and excited

- when I joined DFAT as a young graduate almost fifty per cent of my colleagues were very talented young women
- as my career progressed, far more slowly than I wished, I saw some of those female colleagues racing ahead of me
- I was a little disappointed
- as a breadwinner I needed more money to support my family, and here were bright young women getting promoted ahead of me
- my old traditional values cried out – this is wrong! The previous generation of diplomats – almost all male – had had a dream run of getting promoted without any female competition. Why couldn't I have that good fortune?
- But over the years in DFAT I came to see how competent were my female colleagues, how strong and courageous they were in times of crisis, how smart they were at making difficult decisions
 - I learnt a lot from my female colleagues and bosses
 - and I realised many of them had achieved this while also being the BREADWINNER of the family!
- Over time more women made it to senior positions and I saw how DFAT had become a better, more family-friendly organisation
 - this benefitted my own family in many ways
 - and made working in DFAT more enjoyable and desirable
 - we also performed better as an organisation, winning some amazing diplomatic victories at the UN, in regional organisations and in bilateral relationships.
- But when my daughter became an independent young woman, I became an even stronger supporter of gender equality
 - she is a young teacher now, and still faces structural discrimination – for example she wants to have a child but cannot access maternity leave until she is made permanent

- in her organisation permanency is still many years away.
- Unfairness and inequality still surrounds us every day, and until we can resolve the most basic of inequalities – that between men and women – how can we resolve the other inequalities in our world?
- I know President Jokowi is very concerned about the growing gap between rich and poor in Indonesia
 - I believe courses such as this are an important contribution towards bridging that inequality gap
 - and strengthening the values that we all hold strongly –including the importance of strong, women’s leadership skills.

Ladies and Gentlemen

- The idea for this course came out of a discussion I had with Ibu Nur Fadjri Fadeli from the Makassar Association of Mosques and Mushollas last year
 - we discussed how even in South Sulawesi where the status of women is generally high, women leaders still face discrimination
 - so it is very satisfying to see this course come to fruition.
- I hope this course will help you achieve your personal goals, and also raise your awareness and understanding of Australia
- I hope this course will help you build a network of contacts in Indonesia and Australia, with whom to share ideas and strategies
- I hope this course will contribute towards mitigating conscious and unconscious bias towards women leaders in Indonesia
- And I hope that your examples will contribute towards creating a world where our daughters and our sons face equal opportunities, and can achieve equally their best potential.

Thank you.