

**Mr. Rodrigo Carazo, President of the UNICEF Executive Board,**

**Dr. Rashed Mustafa Sarwar, UNICEF Representative to Malaysia,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Thank you for inviting me to speak at UNICEF Malaysia's presentation of its Country Programme Document (CPD) to the UNICEF Executive Board.

Let me start by congratulating UNICEF Malaysia on the successful development of a new CPD, scheduled to last from 2022 to 2025. UNICEF has been a steadfast partner in Malaysia's socioeconomic development for over 57 years. We hope that this new CPD will further strengthen our partnership.

The eradication of poverty, and child poverty in particular, has always been a priority for Malaysia. Poverty, as you all know, is associated with nutritional deficiency, a lack of access to education, and social consequences such as domestic violence. Over the years, robust and inclusive economic growth has transformed the living standards of many Malaysians, with absolute poverty among households falling, from 49.3 per cent in 1970 to 5.6 per cent in 2019.

We appreciate the good work that has been done all this while by UNICEF Malaysia. For example, UNICEF Malaysia's study entitled *Families on the Edge*, was much appreciated for its valuable insights on the grave consequences of COVID-19 and the impact on vulnerable groups, especially on children and underserved families.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The Twelfth Malaysian Plan, our five-year socioeconomic development plan, outlines specific measures to improve the well-being of children. This includes strengthening early childhood care and education; improving protection against child abuse; formulating a national child development index; and enhancing the governance and implementation mechanism surrounding childcare.

Malaysia remains committed to strengthen social protection and improve child wellbeing. As we do so, we look forward to working closely with UNICEF to strengthen our service delivery framework for vulnerable families.

Malaysia and UNICEF have in the past, worked together to address child-related issues through various programmes and activities. Indeed, UNICEF has already established a strong working relationship with several key Ministries and agencies – and this bond has continued to grow over the years. UNICEF's insight, global experience, and knowledge-sharing have been useful in helping to strengthen the Malaysian Government's social policies, especially with regards to the wellbeing of children.

Going forward, we remain committed to deliver our commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This includes ensuring that every child is given the opportunity to fulfil their potential, and that no child in Malaysia is left behind. Thank you.