

**LAUNCH OF WIM BOOK: “STEEL GARDENIAS: WOMEN’S
LEADERSHIP – THE MALAYSIAN AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE”**

23 AUGUST 2022

SPEECH BY

DATO DR. NELLIE S. L. TAN-WONG,

Chairman, Women’s Institute of Management

and Author of the Book



1. Y. B. Dato Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture
2. His Excellency the Ambassador of Russia
3. Her Excellency the Ambassador of Romania
4. Representatives of the Ambassadors of France, Spain, Indonesia and South Africa
5. Dr. Asa Torkelsson, Representative of UNFPA
6. Representative of OSK Foundation
7. WIM Leaders and Invited Guests
8. Esteemed Members of the Press
9. Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the WIM Board of Trustees, I warmly welcome each and everyone of you this morning with a special thanks to our Guest-of-Honour, Y. B. Dato Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri, the Minister of Tourism, Arts and

Culture, who has been a very good friend of WIM and constantly encourages us in our activities and programmes.

If you look at the history of WIM, you will note that Women's Leadership has been in the forefront of our objectives and actions whether we are training entrepreneurial skills to marginalised women so that they can aspire to own their own business one day or we are conducting a British MBA degree programme since year 2000 for professional women and men of all races, taking up this challenge at a time when no other NGOs and no Malaysian universities were conducting an MBA degree programme.

In our WIM slogan, we also promote partnership with men and this is reflected in the composition of all our committees and even in our membership. We believe that contributions from both genders are invaluable.

Ladies and Gentlemen, perhaps you are wondering why I chose the title Steel Gardenias for my Book. Quite often in the west, strong women are referred to as "Steel Magnolias". Well, in Malaysia, we do not have magnolias, but we do have gardenias, a beautiful white flower with a sweet scent which can be easily found in Malaysia. In fact, for today's event, we have placed a special order for 100 beautiful white gardenia corsages, which are on sale. This is a rare item and I hope all the ladies here will buy one corsage as a special souvenir.

It was during the Covid lockdown period when I decided to write this Book which comprises 432 pages. I wish to thank two special colleagues for encouraging me to undertake this project. Both of them are WIM's trustees and seated at this stage here. They are Dato Dr. Jessie Tang and

Puan Sri Siew Yong Gnanalingam who generously donated RM25,000 each to defray the cost of printing plus research, typing, proofreading and editing services. My services for writing the Book are pro bono. Hence all the book sales are pure profit in aid of WIM. Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me in giving these two ladies a round of applause.

I will also fail in my duty if I do not express my deepest appreciation to Y. B. Tan Sri Dato Seri Utama Dr. Rais Yatim, the Speaker of the Senate of Malaysia, for his most invaluable Foreword in my Book. An author of several books himself, Tan Sri has provided words of wisdom and encouragement in his Foreword which I deeply appreciate.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Book comprises six sections, firstly, Women Leaders in fourteen professions, and they are Accountants, Actuaries, Agriculture, Architects, Climate Change, Doctors and Health, Education, Engineers, Entrepreneurs, Environment, Law, Mindfulness, Scientists and Sports.

This section is followed by sections on Malaysian Women Leaders, Global Women Leaders, Women Prime Ministers and Women Presidents as well as WIM Leaders. Of course, under the Malaysian Women Leaders, I have included our Guest-of-Honour, Dato Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri.

In the section on women in the professions, I have written on the contributions and leadership of women in Malaysia and abroad, and how they have contributed in the development of their respective professions. One such example is Natasha Sivarajah, who produced excellent school results and was awarded a scholarship overseas to study to become an actuary, an unusual and demanding vocation in a male-dominated

profession which supports the insurance industry. She worked hard and produced good results and is today a young Vice President of a huge Malaysian organisation. Natasha is one of the young professionals whom I invited to serve in WIM's Millennials Committee and I am so glad she accepted to serve.

On Global Women Leaders, I have included women in Finance and Banks. Christine Lagarde of France has impressive university qualifications. She joined politics and became France's Minister of Economic Affairs, Finance and Employment. On 28 June 2011, she was elected as the International Monetary Fund or IMF's Managing Director and Chairman for a 5-year term. The then President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy described her appointment as "a victory for France." She received several awards including as the 2nd Most Powerful Woman in the World by Forbes magazine in 2019. On 1st November 2019, she became the first woman to serve as President of the European Central Bank, another great achievement.

In Indonesia, Sri Mulyani Indrawati was the first woman Minister of Finance from 2005-2010 and known as a tough reformist largely credited for strengthening Indonesia's economy throughout the 2007-2010 financial crisis. She successfully tackled corruption and initiated reforms in Indonesia's tax and customs office and developed a reputation for integrity. In 2010, she resigned as Minister of Finance owing to pressure and threats from some powerful men who were affected with her anti-corruption actions, but she was quickly appointed as Managing Director of The World Bank. Fate had something in store for her as on 27 July 2016, she was re-appointed as Indonesia's Minister of Finance by President Joko Widodo, a

forward-thinking President of Indonesia, who has also appointed a woman as Foreign Minister of Indonesia. I hope in Malaysia, we will have a woman Finance Minister or woman Foreign Minister, or both, in the very near future. I think I have to pray very hard.

However, on 16 August 2022, the lady Chief Justice of Malaysia, Tun Tengku Maimun Tuan Mat, with the support of her 5-member Panel of Judges and based on the Code of Ethics, rejected an influential former prime minister's application to postpone again the hearing of his appeal. She stated that justice cannot be unduly delayed. She quoted that Article 8 of the Federal Constitution and the Rule of Law demands that the appellant be treated just like any other accused. In this case, the appellant had been convicted by a previous Court of Appeal with a sentence of a 12-year jail term and a fine of RM210 million Ringgit.

To many Malaysians, this lady Chief Justice had displayed her leadership, courage, firm compliance of her Code of Ethics, no matter how politically powerful the appellant is. This is true leadership!

On Women Presidents in my Book, I wish to draw to your attention the leadership styles of two outstanding women, Atifete Jahjaga, the President of Kosovo and Mary McAleese, the President of Ireland.

Atifete Jahjaga served as the third President and first woman President of Kosovo. She was the first non-partisan candidate and the youngest woman Head of State to be elected to this top office. An unusual aspect of her qualifications before being elected as President, was that she was not a politician. In fact, she was a law graduate who served as Deputy Director of the Kosovo Police, holding the rank of Major General. On 7 April 2011,

Jahjaga was elected President in the first round of voting by Parliament. Her main goal as President was to make Kosovo a member of the European Union and United Nations. Over her term, she held meetings with numerous presidents and prime ministers, kings and queens all over the world to introduce her country and create bilateral ties with these countries. In 2014, Kosovo was threatened by violent extremism and radicalisation, but she turned Kosovo into an international example as to how to address a common challenge to national security. During her term, she advanced and empowered the role of women by hosting international women's summits. She even secured a 22 million Euro donation from Sheikha Bint Mubarak of the United Arab Emirates to build a Paediatric Surgical Hospital in Kosovo.

Mary McAleese served as the 8th President of Ireland from November 1997 to November 2011. She was elected unopposed for a second term in office in 2004. On both occasions, she was elected as an independent. She studied law and graduated in 1974 with first class honours. In 1994, she became the first woman Pro Vice Chancellor of Queen's University. Her presidency theme was "Building Bridges," and she used her term in office to address issues concerning justice, social equality, social inclusion, anti-sectarianism and reconciliation. She made attempts to reach out to the unionists' community in Northern Ireland.

She did not have a warm relationship with the Archbishop of Boston, Cardinal Bernard Francis Law. He told her he was sorry for Catholic Ireland to have her as President. She responded that she was president of Ireland and not just of Catholic Ireland.

On 3 June 2007, she attended the coronation of Pope Benedict in Rome. In August 2007, she spoke out against homophobia at the International Association of Suicide Prevention 24th Biennial Conference. On 13 June 2010, she made an official visit to China and met with Xi Jinping, then Vice President and currently President of China. In September 2010, she met with the then President of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev and officially invited him to visit Ireland. In March 2011, she invited Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom to make a state visit to Ireland. The Queen accepted and from 17-20 May 2011, the first state visit by a British monarch took place. The event was a historic success!

If I had the authority, I would appoint Mary McAleese as the first woman Secretary-General of the United Nations. She would be like a breath of fresh air that will inject humane wisdom.

Y. B. Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen.

In my Book, you will of course find some rogue women Prime Ministers and Presidents who are corrupted and power crazy. I will not mention them by name, but you will read about them in my Book.

Throughout the years WIM has received many international visitors from South Africa, the US and UK, Mauritius, Hongkong, Mongolia, Bangladesh, Canada, Zambia, Denmark, Australia and other countries. WIM has also been recognised globally as I received invitations to speak at conferences organised by the JFK School of Government, Harvard University, the Judge Business School of Cambridge University, the Asia-Australia Institute, the Asia Development Bank, the Canadian University Women's Association,

the Governments of Canada and Western Australia and many others. I do not think I would have been invited if not for the office I hold in WIM.

The last 29 years have kept WIM very busy. We have to date conducted 760 training courses and events benefitting 35,746 participants. For the remainder of year 2022, we plan to conduct entrepreneurial training courses for marginalised Malaysian women in Perak, Selangor, Kedah and Negeri Sembilan. We have also designed an original Women's Leadership Programme, which has been approved by the Ministry of Human Resources. This Programme has been designed for women in middle management who aim to advance their careers. The participants will be assessed by their communications skills and a 2,000-word Assignment, which will be graded by two well-known women corporate leaders to earn a Distinction, Merit or Pass in their certificates. The first cohort will start in September 2022. Employers who contribute to HRDF will be eligible to claim for reimbursement of the fees they pay for their women employees. Y. B. Minister, God willing, we hope to export this Programme to some ASEAN countries. We also maintain an active Website which attracts as many as 156,420 visitors per month from 175 countries throughout the world. Our Website was created with a grant from Telekom Malaysia Berhad. WIM also own this 6-storey Wisma WIM, which is free of debt. This building features a feature wall with a giant spray of the Bunga Raya or Hibiscus, which is Malaysia's national flower painted on old Malacca tiles, at the Atrium, where our publications are being sold. Another interesting feature is the glass ceiling at the Atrium.

WIM also produces an 80-page Business Journal called INSPIRE, every 4 months. It is at its 50th issue at present. INSPIRE can be found in the

Library of not only the Parliament of Malaysia, but also in the Library of the US Congress in Washington, D. C.

But guess what: INSPIRE is also the name of the English language online magazine of Al-Qaeda! WIM's INSPIRE was produced in year 2004 and Al-Qaeda's INSPIRE was created in year 2010.

Y. B. Minister and Ladies and Gentlemen, by your presence this morning in this Auditorium, you have lifted our spirits to a very high level and new WIM memories will forever be filled with happiness and humility. I wish to thank Dr. Mary Barton, our Emcee and the WIM Staff for all their hard work preparing for this event. I also wish to acknowledge the presence of the esteemed members of the Press and Media.

Ribuan Terima Kasih!

A Thousand Thanks!