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“Wanita Suara Perubahan”

Women make up half the population of Malaysia. We contribute a great deal to the social, cultural, economic and political life of this nation, and we have been doing so since before Independence. Women are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of increasing levels of corruption, racism, exploitation, divisive politics and a curtailment of civil liberties. Many of us are struggling to survive. As a consequence, women and their families struggle to survive with their burden worsening day by day. We are intent on change, for a clean government. Today, as part of our celebration of International Women’s Day, we the women of Malaysia stand united to voice out what we want for Malaysia.

“Wanita Suara Perubahan” calls for a clean government

A clean government is an accountable government, adhering to the basic principles of good governance. This call for a clean government comes at a time when our national budget goes into increased deficit and when our country is projected to go bankrupt in less than a decade. The corruption and stacking away of people’s money by those in power is seen as a “right”. A decline in national wealth will affect women in particular as we need to ensure that food is on the table; that children’s health is taken care of; and that there is money to send their children for a proper education. Yes! Women will be the most affected.

Millions of ringgit have been lost that should have been spent to ensure adequate housing, health, transportation, education, living wages and environmental protection. At the same time, basic services, like healthcare, are being privatised and subsidies are being cut. Worker’s rights are being eroded, labour is being casualised and the rakyat are being told to cope and live within their means. Many families, including single parents, struggle to pay the rent, feed their children or access decent healthcare. Many women work long hours or hold several jobs to make ends meet.

A clean government must ensure safety and respect for women and all genders. Violence against women continues to be underreported. In the last two years, 400 out of 1000 cases handled by an NGO indicated that domestic workers are sexually assaulted, raped or molested in the residences where they work. Too often we are told there are not enough shelters or service providers to attend to victims of gender-based violence. There is no support for victims of sexual crimes in court. The system is failing women and the people as crime increases.

A clean government is about building public confidence. In key public institutions such as the Judiciary, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and the police force, which are meant to provide checks and balances and to ensure accountability and rule of law. Their

effectiveness and impartiality are now in question. Women suffer the consequences of unjust laws as well as poor legislation and enforcement of laws relating to women's safety.

A clean government involves the participation of people through consultations, especially with women, where there is opportunity for a variety of opinions to be voiced and dissent expressed. There should be freedom of information and freedom to assemble peacefully. Women's opinions matter. Our voices should be heard, and our civil liberties respected.

Women have fought hard to realise equality. And we have the power to bring about change. We reject all forms of sexism, racism, exploitation, corruption and divisive politics. The 13th General Elections will be held within a year, and we will make a difference. We will vote for a clean government: one that practices good governance and upholds transparency and the right to information.

Wanita Suara Perubahan calls upon all women voters to participate in the 13th GE and to choose good leaders in both State and Federal governments, leaders who will accept and realise our demands.

As we celebrate International Women's Day in 2012, WE DEMAND:

- 1. A GOVERNMENT FREE OF CORRUPTION:*** Accountability and transparency should be institutionalised in all key institutions like the MACC and the Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission (IPCMC). They must come under the Parliament and not under the Prime Minister's Office. A Right to Information Act must be enacted. All government income and expenditure should be made public and transparent, and all ministers and senior officials at the federal and state levels must declare their assets.
- 2. A DECENT LIVING WAGE:*** All women and their families should enjoy a decent standard of living and a decent living wage beginning with a basic minimum of RM1500 per month with increased statutory benefits regulated for all workers.
- 3. A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE:*** In order to achieve a higher quality of life for all, especially for the marginalised, and all privatisation programmes related to health, transport and public housing must stop. The government must ensure access to health for all, decent housing for all, and an effective and affordable public transport system.
- 4. AN END TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND ALL GENDERS:*** All forms of violence and discrimination against women and all genders must stop. This includes violence against children. Access to justice for survivors of violence must be ensured. An independent special commission should be established to critically evaluate the situation, review all laws and develop effective reforms and mechanisms to ensure security and justice.
- 5. REPEAL THE PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY ACT:*** Our constitutional right to assemble peacefully should be upheld at all times.
- 6. FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS:*** Ensure women's right to construct a democratic nation through free and fair elections as stated in the BERSIH 2.0 eight demands.