

# **1st Asia Pacific Reach to Recovery Breast Cancer Support Conference Closing Ceremony Speech 11 August 2002**

## **By Conference Organising Chairperson – Ms Ranjit Kaur**

-Yang Berhormat Dato' Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, Minister of Women and Family Development Malaysia.

-Mr. Tom Hudson, Dr Jeff Dunn and Prof. Robert Burton of the UICC

-Mrs. Dorothy Teoh, President of Breast Cancer Welfare Association and the host of 1st Asia Pacific Reach to Recovery Breast Cancer Support Conference

-Dr Richard Ho, Director of Business Development, Sunway Lagoon Resort Hotel

-Delegates of the Conference.

A very good afternoon to all of you

We have now come to the end of the Conference where we had deliberated upon issues related to breast cancer which are close to our hearts, both literally and figuratively. Yang Berhormat, the conference has produced several resolutions that we collectively agree can be addressed by your Ministry and other related Ministries in Malaysia and in the Asia Pacific Region.

Yang Berhormat, Ladies and Gentlemen, more than 375 delegates comprising breast cancer survivors, volunteers and health care providers from Australia, Bangladesh, USA, HK, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, USA and Vietnam have benefited from this conference which also included a pre-conference workshop on Development and Delivery of Breast Cancer Support Service in the Asia Pacific Region. The theme of the Conference being Celebrating Wellness, the organising committee ensured that every aspect of the scientific programme incorporated and *resulted* in the delegates taking home with them a slice of celebration. The life of the woman with breast cancer switches overnight from taking life for granted to facing up to her mortality. We have experienced fears of social marginalisation and social rejection at some time of our journey of treatment and recovery, and many of us even today. At this conference various issues were discussed and we focused upon the challenges faced in breast cancer, updates on treatment and rehabilitation, communicating with society and breast cancer, complementary therapy and support groups in the region.

The resolutions and recommendations are

1. The need for networking amongst all government, NGO and corporate organisations and individuals to ensure an improved quality of life for women with breast cancer; (collaborative effort)
2. The need for lobbying for the right of every woman with breast cancer in the areas of insurance coverage or government subsidy for breast reconstruction/breast prosthesis and follow up sessions
3. The need for formation of a National Coalition of Breast Cancer Support Organisations in Malaysia, where the members who are largely women with Breast Cancer can address their needs and concern through training, access to information, research and advocacy.

This National Coalition can be the one voice for all women with breast cancer. For example, it can influence government policy and represent every women with breast cancer and her loved ones in the country.

In view of this we humbly request that Yang Berhormat be the patron to this National Coalition. We are confident that with Yang Berhormat's leadership, we Malaysian women with breast cancer will have a promising improvement in quality of live.

Similarly, as the organizing chairperson of the Conference, I strongly recommend that our foreign delegates return home with similar recommendations.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mrs. Dorothy Teoh for having very kindly hosted this Conferencæ which is the first of this kind in the region. I am indeed proud of you and the executive committee members of Breast Cancer Welfare Association who have always viewed such vibrant events as survivors being in control of their lives.

To the International Union against Cancer and Reach To Recovery International, my deepest gratitude for your support in the co-organising of this event. The presence of eminent UICC personalities, that is Mr. Tom Hudson, Dr. Jeff Dunn and Prof. Robert Burton, at this conferece is an honor that we are recognized by our parent bodies; that we are alive and kicking and are doing something concrete about our lives as women with breast cancer. Several corporate agencies, medical associations, private companies and individuals have voluntarily come forward to support us financially and professionally. Thanks to all of you for your support and we do hope that this support continues.

Without the support and active participation of the Ministry Women and Family Development Malaysia, we would not have been able to get to where we are today with this conference. On behalf of the organizing committee of the 1st Asia Pacific Reach to Recovery Breast Cancer Support Conference, I wish to extend my deepest gratitude to our dear Minister, Ya ng Berhormat Dato' Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil for constantly ensuring that the Ministry supports us in our endeavour to organise such a successful conference.