

**MESSAGE BY THE MINISTER OF CULTURE, YOUTH AND  
SPORTS  
IN CONJUNCTION WITH  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2023**

1. Alhamdulillah, Brunei Darussalam will once again celebrate International Women 's Day (IWD) on Wednesday, March 8, 2023, with this year's theme: "**DigitALL: Innovation and Technology**".
2. This theme is also aligned with the priority theme for the 67th Session of the *Commission on the Status of Women (CSW-67)* currently taking place at the United Nations in New York, which is "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls".
3. *The United Nations Observance of IWD* recognizes and celebrates women and girls who are championing the advancement of transformative technology and digital education. This year's celebration emphasizes the importance of protecting the rights of women and girls in the digital space and addressing violence online and in information communication technology (ICT).
4. As such, the involvement of women and girls in technology can produce more creative solutions and increase the potential of innovation to meet the needs and development of women, as well as raising awareness regarding their rights and civic engagement. The United Nations also added that advances in digital technology can support efforts to address development and humanitarian challenges and achieve the *2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goals*. Therefore, inclusive and transformative technology and digital education are essential for a sustainable future.
5. Alhamdulillah, Brunei Darussalam remains committed in achieving Vision towards an educated, highly skilled and accomplished citizens, with a high quality of life; and a nation with dynamic and sustainable economy. Among the achievements of women in Brunei Darussalam in the digital sector are as Chief Executive Officers in telecommunications

companies and as Chair of the InfoCom Federation Brunei (IFB); as recipients of the Gold Award under the Digital Content category in the ASEAN ICT Awards 2021 (AICTA 2021) and the recent Asia-Pacific ICT Awards (APICTA 2022) under the Inclusions & Community – Sustainability and Environment/Education category; as well as winner of the Women of the Future (WOF) Awards in the Science, Technology and Digital category.

6. Brunei Darussalam also provides equal access and opportunities to men and women in using technology whether in terms of education, health, social, economic and innovation. Several initiatives of innovation, technology support and education in this digital era have proven to be able to empower society including women and girls. Among the relevant initiatives are the National Welfare System (SKN); mobile applications such as Bruhealth, "Mengalinga" and the Registry for Children and Young Person in Need of Protection (RCYPNP) portal. In addition, relevant agencies have also implemented several capacity building programmes in the field of ICT, such as:

- a. In conjunction with *Girls in ICT Day*, the Authority for Info-communications Technology Industry (AITI) held an online webinar on Personal Data Protection with the theme "*Secure Your Digital Identity*" on 28 April 2022 which was attended by women and girls of all ages, and conducted by a local female speaker.
- b. AITI has also been actively conducting Digital Skills Training for Senior Citizens which was first introduced in October 2019 with the active involvement of the elderly including women from all districts. This was carried out in collaboration with Government and private agencies with presentations and practical demonstrations by trainers and facilitators from the Department of Curriculum Development, Ministry of Education; IT Protective Security Services Sdn Bhd (ITPSS), as well as representatives from local e-commerce companies. The programme also covered a wide range of topics including basic ICT skills, online safety and security, introduction to e-commerce and its opportunities, useful mobile applications, online shopping and cyber security tips. As a continuity to this, two *Digital for All* sessions for male and female participants under the Community Development Department (JAPEM) and senior citizens at the Senior Citizen Activity Center (PKWE) were held on 8-9 November and 1 December, 2022. *Digital for All* is an initiative of AITI to educate the community about digital literacy and basic ICT skills. The session covered *eCommerce*, digital marketing and cyber security facilitated by *Tech One Global*.

7. Based on **the Research on Women's Development in Brunei Darussalam** which has been carried out on female respondents aged 15 and over throughout the country, women's involvement in the digital, engineering and ICT fields still has room for improvement. In addition, only 17% of women without Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) or higher education have basic computer skills. Hence, support for women to excel and master ICT skills is encouraged.
8. The Research on Women's Development in Brunei Darussalam is carried out to identify the opportunities and challenges faced by women in this country to ensure that they can attain an equitable level of development. The findings will be used as a basis to develop a **Plan of Action on Women** under the National Council of Social Issues, which is more targeted and impactful that will contribute towards the identification of Government policies and national initiatives that need to be established or strengthened for the development and empowerment of women in this country.
9. According to the latest statistics, women comprise more than 47% of the total population in Brunei Darussalam. Therefore, women in this country have a very important role and contribution in socio-economic development and the maintenance of peace and security. Women have joined hands to achieve economic progress, family well-being, social and national prosperity.
10. In conjunction with the 10th International Women's Day celebration this year, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports through the Community Development Department (JAPEM) has plans to collaborate with various government agencies, private sector, non-governmental organizations and women advocates, including Womentechmakers. Among the objectives of this year's celebration is to provide a platform for the public to share about women's success, awareness and issues related to women in society.
11. Last but not least: ***Happy International Women's Day to all the women in Brunei Darussalam.*** We hope for continued success in unity for the socio-economic development of our Monarch, Country, Nation and Religion.