NATIONAL STATEMENT

BY

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

TO THE UNITED NATIONS

THIRD COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM: 27

“STRENGTHENING FAMILY INSTITUTION”

68TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr Chairman,

1. First of all, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you and the members of the Bureau on your election. I wish you much success and assure you of Brunei Darussalam’s full cooperation and support in the work of this Committee.

2. Like other ASEAN Member States, Brunei Darussalam aligns itself with the Joint ASEAN Statement on Social Development and I thank our colleague from Malaysia for delivering it on our behalf.

Mr Chairman,

3. Brunei Darussalam welcomes the United Nations’ efforts in prioritising the development of women, family and children. This is in relation to the various initiatives established by the United Nations towards this end such as the International Day of Families on 15 May. Brunei Darussalam also appreciates the efforts towards the protection of women and children as has been upheld under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

4. Family institution should be the first line of support in the community. It is also the pillar of national development, strength and resilience of the society and country and therefore must be preserved and strengthened. In a close-knit community like Brunei Darussalam, family values are integral to the moral fabric of the society and play a significant role for its wellbeing.

5. In Brunei Darussalam, the average family size is 5.8 and this often comprised extended family structure, in which parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts living together. This extended structure is a distinctive part of the society in Brunei Darussalam. It is also the foundation of the family which emphasises on interdependency and support amongst its members. It provides an ideal platform for
inculcating positive values and for each family member to realise their responsibility as parent, child, grandparent, aunt, uncle and so on. This extended family structure therefore plays a significant role in the family's stability and promotes a strong and cohesive society.

Mr Chairman,

6. The family and the need to strengthen its institution is a high priority for the Government of Brunei Darussalam. In this regard, a Special Committee on Family Institution and Women was established in 2008 to better coordinate national efforts towards promoting, protecting and strengthening the family institution. This committee has formulated a National Plan of Action on Family Institution which prioritises several important elements including work-family balance, family and economy, family and legal rights, family and health and research on family related issues.

7. In recognition of the importance of the family institution, Brunei Darussalam declared the first Sunday of May every year as its National Family Day. The first National Family Day in Brunei Darussalam was celebrated on 6 May 2012 with the theme "My Family, My Aspiration". The main objective of the celebration was to strengthen and improve the wellbeing of families by bringing them closer together through collaborative programmes believed to effectively create a tightknit society and instil greater awareness on the importance of family institutions in the development of the community.

Mr Chairman,

8. In Brunei Darussalam, education and health services are provided free to all citizens. Parents who send their children to private schools are entitled to educational allowances. Medical services are also provided in schools including
inoculation and dental services. All these are designed to assist parents in their parental obligations and to impact upon the society the importance of the well-being of the family.

9. Brunei Darussalam has also established several programmes to strengthen and empower families. Many of these programmes received wide support of the private sector, NGO’s and civil societies particularly those relating to the disabled and the elderly. Among others the programmes include pre-marital courses for young couples, post-marital courses, parenting skills, communication skills, family’s financial management, counseling as well as awareness campaigns on family values, reproductive health, chronic diseases and domestic violence. The pre-marital courses, for example, aim to equip young couples with the knowledge and necessary skills to enable them to cope with family life challenges and help them build a strong and healthy family relations. The courses are also to create awareness amongst young couples that marriage is not just a wedding ceremony, but it is a long journey that requires closer understanding, love and tolerance for a stronger family life. Furthermore, from time to time, Happy Family campaigns are conducted in Brunei Darussalam at the grassroots level to create and cultivate awareness of the vital role of parents in imparting desired social values to their children.

10. At the regional level, Brunei Darussalam has just hosted the 5th East Asian Ministerial Meeting on Families from 2 to 3 October with the theme “Ensuring Work Family Balance”. The Meeting adopted the Brunei Darussalam Statement which acknowledged that work-family imbalance could lead to social, psychological and somatic problems, family instability and reduced productivity at the work place. The Meeting also highlighted concerns that insufficient policy for assisting workers to balance work and family responsibilities could cause work and family conflict.

11. In conclusion, Mr Chairman, Brunei Darussalam has always viewed the family institution as vital for nation-building. Family is the smallest unit in the community and we believe that strengthening the institution could promote social stability. We are, therefore, positive that the policy put in place by our Government would make a difference in strengthening and improving the family institution. Furthermore, social
stability resulting from a strong family unity could become the driver for the nation's economic development.

12. It is our belief that the family is the basic unit of society and must be preserved as it has a very high impact on our nation's future. Brunei Darussalam, therefore, supports effort to protect and empower the physical, psychological, emotional, and intellectual capabilities of families.

Thank you.