



## **Keynote Address**

**Dato' Mohammad Faiz Azmi**

**Chairman, Securities Commission Malaysia**

**30% Club Malaysia 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**

**10.00 am, 8 May 2025**

**Securities Commission Malaysia**

---

Yang Berhormat Dato' Sri Hajah Fatimah Abdullah, Minister for Women, Early Childhood and Community Well-being Development of Sarawak,

Yang Berusaha Pn. Nurul A'in Abdul Latif, Chair of 30% Club Malaysia and Executive Chairman, PwC Malaysia,

Yang Berbahagia Tan Sri Zarinah Anwar, Founding Chair, 30% Club Malaysia,

Yang Berbahagia Tan Sri Nazir Razak, Chairman, ASEAN Business Advisory Council,

Yang Berusaha Encik Khairy Jamaludin,

Distinguished speakers, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh, and a very good morning. Welcome to the Securities Commission Malaysia (SC).

1. It is a pleasure to be here to celebrate a significant milestone – the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 30% Club Malaysia. The club was launched on this day in

2015, and its objective then was to put people and inclusiveness firmly at the heart of its purpose.

2. After a decade of advocacy, engagement, and driving change much has been achieved. Beyond this milestone, we also celebrate a movement that has transformed our outlook on gender diversity and board effectiveness.
3. So, congratulations again to the 30% Club Malaysia on your growth and achieving a significant milestone as a torchbearer for equitable representation.
4. This journey by the 30% Club is as one that I had the privilege of being involved in, back in 2017, during my time as Chair of PwC Malaysia. PwC then worked closely with Anne Abraham and her team to get the Board Mentoring Scheme up and running.
5. This platform to bring together experienced directors and board members to mentor and nurture board-ready women is important. The goal was to create a talent pipeline that was not just capable, but visible. It was about opening doors, and more importantly, helping women walk through them with confidence.
6. Even now, in my current role as SC Chairman, the broader objective remains the same. That is, to build an inclusive corporate landscape where diversity drives performance.
7. The conversation around diversity should extend beyond gender alone. In corporate leadership, a truly balanced composition should encompass other aspects of diversity – to enrich the quality of decision making and guard against groupthink.
8. That said, in the spirit of today's occasion, we will focus our attention on the gender aspect of board diversity, in recognition of the efforts by the 30% Club Malaysia.

9. Today's theme – *Inclusive Future* – is fitting. It captures where we have been, where we are at, and what still needs to be done.
10. Let us start with the key question for the panel discussion: Is 30% still the goal?
11. To answer this question, let us go back to why we used the 30% in the first place.
12. The core idea is about creating a critical mass of candidates and not just one or two. Anecdotally, many women share that being the sole female voice on a board is a lonely experience. This isolation, unfortunately, does limit impact.
13. Another real risk is tokenism. Companies that focus on fulfilling quotas, or worse, create the illusion of diversity, or using it as a ticking box exercise, end up diminishing the effectiveness of their boards.
14. This is why representation must translate into participation. We want female directors to have a voice, a vote, and a role in shaping decisions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

### **30% Continues to be Work-in-Progress**

15. Globally, efforts to increase the participation of women on boards have demonstrated progress but this momentum must continue.
16. As at October 2023, 41.2% of large- and mid-cap listed companies in developed and emerging markets met the threshold of 30% female directors<sup>1</sup>. Sounds impressive - however, only a third of this managed to sustain this level for at least three consecutive years<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Source: MSCI analysis of MSCI All Country World Index (ACWI).

<sup>2</sup> Source: MSCI data as of February 2024.

17. More worryingly, the data show that other PLCs outside this group either had few or no women directors. This means, on average, women only occupy slightly more than a quarter of board seats on highly liquid listed companies.
18. A sobering reminder that the work is far from done. This is also the case for Malaysia.
19. In 2011, 56% of our listed companies had all-male boards with women only holding 7% of board positions.
20. A soft touch approach was initially employed to raise female participation. Since 2012, the Malaysian Code on Corporate Governance (MCCG) recommended the target of 30% women on board for large PLCs. In 2021, this was extended to all listed companies.
21. Subsequently, the mandatory one-woman director listing requirement was introduced by Bursa Malaysia in 2022 and fully enforced since June 2023.
22. Significantly, the overall percentage of women on boards has grown to double digits. As shared by Nurul earlier, it has reached 33%<sup>3</sup> as of 1 April 2025. However, challenges remain.
23. There are currently 7 PLCs with all-male boards<sup>4</sup> despite the one-woman director rule. This highlights the challenge for companies outside the Top 100 to try harder to meet this requirement.
24. It is a slightly different issue for 35 of our Top 100 PLCs. They have already met the mandatory one-woman director rule, but have fallen short of the 30% target.
25. The SC recently held an enlightening dialogue with the Nomination Committee Chairs of these 35 PLCs in March this year to understand their issues in selecting

---

<sup>3</sup> For Top 100 PLCs

<sup>4</sup> Data as of 1 April 2025

suitable candidates. I have also written to all companies that have not met this target. We intend to continue to use a soft touch to ensure this target is met by 2027.

## **Priorities Moving Forward**

26. Looking ahead, what is required to move the needle even more?
27. For Malaysia, a critical gap is the lack of empirical evidence connecting gender diversity to corporate performance at the local level. We need hard evidence for greater buy-in and we hope academia will look at this as a research topic.
28. At a global level, such research is readily available. For example, McKinsey & Company started tracking the business case for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) ten years ago. Their current dataset spans more than 1,200 companies, 26 countries and six regions.
29. The most recent report from McKinsey shows that companies with greater diversity - especially those in the top quartile for gender and ethnic representation - are 39% more likely to outperform financially<sup>5</sup>.
30. The message is clear: inclusion makes business sense and we ignore the data at our own cost.
31. To address the gap in our evidence base, the SC is working with the 30% Club Malaysia and academic partners to conduct a comprehensive, data-driven study. We want to gather data evidence to show that the participation of women in the corporate world, matters - not just in financial matters, but also their impact to other areas like corporate strategy, risk management and ESG.

---

<sup>5</sup> Source: McKinsey & Company, *Diversity Matters Even More* (December 2023)

32. This will convince more corporate boards, as well as investors, that investing in diversity generates wide and more holistic benefits than just a profitable bottom line.
33. The continued support of stakeholders such as the Institutional Investors Council Malaysia (IICM) and the Minority Shareholders Watch Group (MSWG) for the DEI agenda will be crucial for wider adoption.
34. The Malaysian Code for Institutional Investors stresses that institutional investors should assess the quality of disclosures on diversity targets and policies. Therefore, the SC wholly supports the IICM's stance to oppose the reappointment of Nomination Committee Chairs if investee companies fail to meet the 30% target.
35. I must also commend organisations such as the Institute of Corporate Directors Malaysia (ICDM) and Lead Women that have facilitated training, mentoring, and board placement services for women leaders.
36. We cannot push for gender-balanced boards without having in place a ready and credible pipeline. Such efforts must continue to reduce non-compliance issues attributed allegedly to 'a limited talent pool', as well as to allow for board refreshment to inject new perspectives and skills.
37. Lastly, the discourse on DEI has to shift beyond board seats. Culture matters. Inclusive corporate culture has to permeate every level of the company - its values, policies and behaviours. And it is a responsibility for every one of us, not just the leaders.
38. It is therefore timely that the 30% Club is launching the 'Men Allies for Parity' movement today. This is a step towards accelerating our collective journey towards a more equitable and representative future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

## **Closing**

39. The SC remains fully committed to promoting diversity - not just through rules, but through partnerships and collaborations.
40. We believe it is more than a moral imperative; it is a strategic advantage.
41. In closing, let me congratulate again the 30% Club Malaysia, its founding members including Tan Sri Zarinah - my predecessor at the SC, its Corporate Advocates<sup>6</sup>, volunteers and supporters for their contributions in shaping our corporate landscape.
42. May you continue the good work with the same passion, vigour and courage demonstrated over the past 10 years. I have no doubt that this will lead us towards a better and more inclusive Malaysia.

Thank you.

ENDS

---

<sup>6</sup> Note: Organisations that become members of the 30% Club are known as Corporate Advocates