

South East Asia Women in Sport Conference, September 2006

Malaysian Minister joins WSI

WomenSport International welcomes Dato' Azalina Othman Said, Minister for Youth and Sport in Malaysia, to its membership. In recognition of her outstanding contribution to women's sport in Malaysia Dato' Azalina received a complimentary membership on WSI at the South East Asia Women in Sport Conference which was held for the first time on 21-22 September 2006 in Kuala Lumpur.



L-R: Dato' Azalina Othman Said, Minister for Youth and Sport, and Johanna Vescio, WSI Executive Committee member

Before entering politics at the turn of the millennium Dato' Azalina was a partner in the largest law firm in Malaysia. In March 2004 she was appointed as the Minister of Youth and Sport. Her appointment has made a mark in history by becoming the first woman Minister of Youth and Sport in her country and the youngest Cabinet Minister. She is also a Foundation Board member of the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA).

In her opening speech at the SEA Women in Sport Conference entitled "Paradigms of Change" she said:

"There is a powerful correlation between the increased participation of women in sports to the global issues of women empowerment, and more specifically, gender equality."

She also mentioned that, in June 2006, she created a Women and Sports Division within the National Sports Council headed by Dr. Shamala Subramaniam and twelve full time staff.

"By placing women in strategic positions we hope to encourage more women to take the lead and create more opportunities for women in sports nationwide."

Following the opening speech Johanna Vescio, WSI Executive Committee member, presented the 1st keynote on strategies to facilitate women's participation in sport.



Participants at the SEA Women in Sport Conference in Kuala Lumpur

350 participants attended the Conference which was hosted by the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation Malaysia (WSFFM). Dato' Azalina is also a Founder and the current Chair of WSFFM, the NGO for women and sport in her country launched in 1995.

In addition to organising the SEA Women in Sport Conference, WSFFM organised jointly with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the National Sports Council and the National Sports Associations the first National Women's Games in 2005. A total of 3,000 athletes and officials participated in the games across nine sports which were aquatics, athletics, badminton, bowling, football, gymnastics, hockey, squash and netball.

Other WSFFM projects include the Power Walk Series, Young Women's Health Seminar, the Women's Coaching Convention and the 4x4 Woman Challenge. Further information about the SEA Women in Sport conference and WSFFM can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/WSFFM/>

WSI congratulates Dato' Azalina on her accomplishments, a strong woman in many respects. Incidentally, she holds a 6th Dan Black Belt in Taekwondo!