

# Beyond the Frontiers of Inner Space: The Success Story of Y.Bhg. Datuk Dr Mazlan Othman



by Ir. Sharifah Azlina bt. Raja Kamal Pasmah

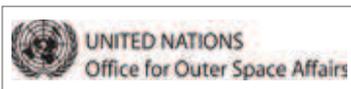
IN November 2011, the Sub-Committee on Women Engineers, IEM brainstormed on the list of prominent Malaysian women engineers, scientists and technologists to be invited to the upcoming WiSET Conference 2012. The first name that came to my mind was Y.Bhg. Datuk Dr Mazlan Othman, who perfectly fitted the criteria owing to her significant contribution, at both national and international levels, to the space industry.

In 1981, Datuk Dr Mazlan had pioneered an academic programme on astrophysics at the National University of Malaysia (UKM) and was appointed as Professor of Astrophysics in 1994. She was seconded to the Department of the Prime Minister in 1990 and has directed the establishment of the National Planetarium, under the Space Science Studies Division. As its Director-General, she was instrumental in the design and manufacture of Malaysia's first remote-sensing satellite, TiungSAT-1, which was launched in year 2000.

Subsequently, she was appointed as the Director of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) in 1999. In 2002, she returned to Malaysia to set up the National Space Agency. She was instrumental in spearheading the 'Angkasawan' Programme which saw the launch of the first Malaysian astronaut to the International Space Station in 2007.



Datuk Dr Mazlan who resumed the post of Director of UNOOSA in 2007 was later appointed as the Deputy Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV) in 2009 where she is based until today.



*Y.Bhg. Datuk Dr Mazlan Othman  
Deputy Director-General, United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV)  
Director, United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)*

Fortunately, Eastern Europe was the destination of my family vacation that year and Datuk Dr Mazlan was kind to take time off from her busy schedule to meet up with me during my visit. Hence, on the wintry morning of 7 December 2011, I headed to the United Nation office in Vienna and it was one of the most memorable experiences I had ever had.

Established on 1 January 1980 as the third United Nations Headquarters after New York and Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV) is housed in the Vienna International Centre, Kaisermühlen (United Nation, 2012). One is required to provide a valid identification document with photograph and has to go through a stringent security check before gaining entry into the said premises.

The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) is the UN office responsible for promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. It is also responsible for implementing the Secretary-General's responsibilities under international space law and maintaining the United Nations Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space. UNOOSA conducts international workshops, training courses and pilot projects on topics which include remote sensing, satellite navigation, satellite meteorology, tele-education and basic space sciences through the United Nations Programmes on Space Applications for the benefit of developing nations.



It also maintains a 24-hour hotline as the United Nations focal point for satellite imagery requests during disasters and manages the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UNOOSA, 2012). UNOOSA prepares and distributes reports, studies and publications on various fields of space science and technology applications as well as international space law.

Facilitated by Datuk Dr Mazlan, my children were placed on a guided tour of the complex. They were given a glimpse of the work of the United Nations and had an opportunity to experience the ambiance of the Vienna International

Centre's commanding architecture. They saw exhibitions on the work of the United Nations and were taken to one of the impressive conference rooms where they re-acted the conduct of a meeting as though they were UN delegates!



Although Datuk Dr Mazlan was unable to attend the WiSET conference in Kuala Lumpur, we were privileged and immensely gratified by her valuable effort in preparing a pre-recorded address for the opening of the forum session during the conference proceeding. Her address entitled, '*Role of Women in Science, Engineering and Technology in Nation Building*' deliberated on the significant roles of women in science, engineering and technology in nation building as both, a participant and a policy maker.

As a participant who is involved in the implementation of scientific programmes, Datuk Dr Mazlan advocates the importance of working hard, finding one's niche area and keeping clients as one's top priority. As a policy maker, the attributes that are crucial include the commitment to stay on top of the field of expertise and to focus on what is important. She further elaborated that women should take advantage of their policy-making role to include their family's perspective, in addition to building up the 'invisible resume' in charting one's career. ■

## REFERENCES

- [1] United Nation, 2012. [www.unvienna.org](http://www.unvienna.org). [Online] [Accessed 5 September 2012].
- [2] UNOOSA, 2012. [www.oosa.unvienna.org](http://www.oosa.unvienna.org). [Online] [Accessed 5 September 2012].

## VOTING PAPERS FOR COUNCIL ELECTION SESSION 2013/2014

Voting papers for the Election of Council Member for Session 2013/2014 will be posted to all Corporate Members on 28 February 2013. All Corporate Members are to take note of the requirements of Bylaw Section 5.11.

*The voting paper shall, not less than twenty-eight (28) clear days before the date of the Annual General Meeting be sent by post to all Corporate Members residing in Malaysia and to any other Corporate Members who may in writing request to have the paper forwarded to him. The voting paper shall be returned to the Honorary Secretary in a sealed envelope so as to reach him by a specified date not less than seven (7) days before the Annual General Meeting.*

It is expected to send out the voting papers by **28 February 2013** in compliance with the requirements of Bylaw Clause 5.11 above. The voting papers will be sent by post to all Corporate Members residing in Malaysia.

**Any Corporate Members residing outside Malaysia, who wish to receive voting papers are advised to write to the Honorary Secretary on or before 15 February 2013.**

Thank you.

*Data' Jr. Pang Leong Hoon*  
Election Officer, IEM