

MALAYSIA COMMEMORATES HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Print

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Malaysia joins the international community in celebrating Human Rights Day on 10 December 2021. To commemorate the occasion this year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Legal Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) and the United Nations (UN) in Malaysia co-organised once again a forum with the theme, "Access to Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment as a Human Right".

The theme for the forum is in line with a significant global agreement – the UN Human Rights Council resolution that was adopted on 8 October this year; which for the first time placed the environment at the heart of the human rights agenda. The resolution highlighted the human rights implications of environmental damage and climate change faced by individuals and communities around the world, especially on vulnerable groups, including the indigenous peoples, older persons, persons with disabilities, and women. It further called on States to act collectively with national and international partners to realise this right.

YB Dato' Saifuddin Abdullah, Minister of Foreign Affairs, officiated the forum. In his pre-recorded message, the Foreign Minister underscored that "As the nation develops socio-economically, we do not wish to see our development gains, prosperity and quality of life being reversed or overturned by climate-related hazards and natural disasters".

The keynote address was delivered by YBhg. Prof. Tan Sri Dr. Jemilah Mahmood, Executive Director of Sunway Centre for Planetary Health and Pro-Chancellor of Heriot-Watt University Malaysia. She reflected on scientific progress made by humankind in the last two centuries, which may bring social and economic progress but come at the expense of the planetary health. She challenged each individuals to do their part in ensuring a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment by going beyond the traditional 3Rs of "Reduce, Reuse and Recycle" to practise Refuse, Rethink, Repair, Rot (compost) and Repurpose.

The importance of the human rights perspective to effectively ensure access to safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment were highlighted at the forum. In his opening address, YBhg. Tan Sri Othman Hashim emphasised that every citizen needs a clean and healthy environment. To successfully safeguard and protect the environment, all stakeholders must undertake environmental management effort to rebuild the world we want, with global solidarity, interconnectedness, and shared humanity at both national and international levels.

Representing the UN, Karima El Korri, Resident Coordinator for Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and Singapore remarked “197 countries and 120 world leaders have just come out the COP26, fully aware of the real and existential threat of the climate emergency and the criticality of bold action now. The call for behavioural, regulatory, policy and financing changes was loud and clear, and should be heard not by governments alone but also by the private sector, civil society, communities, and all of us living on planet Earth. As we embark on this bumpy ride to a more sustainable future, putting human rights at the centre of climate action, of conservation, of addressing pollution and of preventing future pandemics is a moral duty.”

The forum also featured esteemed panellists, from various background and expertise, who focused on the impact of environmental degradation and climate change on the enjoyment of human rights, as well as, to explore sustainable environmental solutions.

The panellists included Ahmad Farid bin Mohammed, Deputy Undersecretary, Climate Change Division, Ministry of Water and Environment, Malaysia; YBhg Dato’ Mah Weng Kwai, Commissioner 2016-2022 SUHAKAM; Katinka Weinberger, Chief, Environment and Development Policy Section, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; YBhg Datin Seri Sunita Rajakumar, Founding Member, Climate Governance Malaysia and Muhammad Shaqib Shahrilnizam, Former Global Youth Focal Point on Climate Finance to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The forum was also addressed by YB Dato’ Sri Azalina Othman Said, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on Law and Human Rights and was closed by YB Dato Sri Dr. Hj Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department (Parliament and Law).

Malaysia’s priority in addressing climate change is part of the country’s pledges for its membership of the Human Rights Council for the term 2022-2024 and consistent with its commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is also in line with the 12th Malaysia Plan (2021-2025), as unveiled by YAB Prime Minister towards a prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable growth for all.

10 December marks the formal inception of Human Rights Day since 1950, with the passing of resolution 423 (V) by the General Assembly and since then, Human Rights Day is observed by the international community annually on this date. It commemorates the day on which the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a milestone document that proclaimed the inalienable rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being – regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinions, national or social origin, property, birth or another status.

PUTRAJAYA

10 DECEMBER 2021