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Message from the Permanent Representative

Dear Esteemed Readers of La Voix,

It gives me great pleasure to present you with the latest edition of the La Voix newsletter for the first half of 2020, showcasing the Mission's activities during the early months of 2020 and the challenging period of March to June when we underwent a lockdown in Geneva.

It has been very challenging for the past few months, as the Swiss authorities imposed border, travel and other restrictions, the suspension of UN-related meetings and new practices on social distancing, to name but a few. During this trying period, the Permanent Mission continued to render assistance to the Malaysian community, providing advice and assistance to those facing travel difficulties, consular services and providing updates on latest developments, policies and regulations related to COVID-19 in Malaysia. We continued to participate actively in meetings organised virtually by the relevant UN agencies and other international organisations. Like all of you, we at the Permanent Mission in Geneva had to make necessary adjustments and adapt to the "new normal."

On this note, it is with much relief that the Swiss authorities have gradually eased the restrictive measures. International arrivals have started to pick up, and the borders between Switzerland and its neighbouring countries have reopened. In line with this easing of measures, I am pleased to inform you that the Permanent Mission resumed full operations as of 15 June 2020. However, as part of the precautionary measures of the "new normal", we encourage those requesting consular support to call the Mission first to arrange for appointments. Additionally, in view of concerns that the COVID-19 virus may resurface in the colder seasons, I urge everyone to continue observing strict hygiene and social distancing guidelines. Together, we can defeat this virus here in Geneva and at home in Malaysia through our continued vigilance.

On a final note, I wish to extend a happy Selamat Hari Raya Aidil-Fitri to our Muslim readers celebrating this happy occasion.

Stay safe and stay healthy.



Dato' Dr. Ahmad Faisal Muhamad,
Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations
and other International Organisations in Geneva



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Malawakil Geneva

HUMAN RIGHTS



43rd Regular Session of the Human Rights Council

Malaysia continued to actively engage on various issues during the 43rd Regular Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC43). Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the session, which began on 24 February 2020, was suspended on 13 June and resumed its final week on 15 June 2020. Among the interventions made during HRC43 were for the following:

- High-Level Panel Discussion on the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Conference
- Interactive Dialogue (ID) on Commission of Inquiry on Protests in the Occupied Palestinian Territory
- ID on the Human Rights of Rohingya and other Minorities in Myanmar
- ID with Special Rapporteur (SR) on Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- ID with SR on rights of persons with disabilities
- ID with SR on human rights and the environment
- ID with SR on the sale and sexual exploitation of children
- ID with SR on the IE on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism
- ID with SR on the right to food
- Discussion on the UN Secretary General update on UN involvement in Myanmar
- Human rights situation in Palestine and other Arab territories



HE Dato' PR delivering Malaysia's statement during Item 7: Human rights situation in Palestine and other Arab territories



HE Dato' PR in discussions with Her Excellency Retno Marsudi, Foreign Minister of Indonesia, during the sidelines of HRC43



Malaysia's delegation to HRC43 included officials from the Foreign Ministry of Malaysia, led by Mr. Adlan Mohd Shaffieq , Undersecretary for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, as well as officers from his division, together with Y.Bhg. Datuk Anis Yusal Yusoff, Deputy Director General of the National Centre for Governance, Integrity and Anti-corruption, Prime Minister's Department.

Aside from attending meetings related to the Human Rights Council, other engagements included discussions with civil society organisations on human rights developments in Malaysia, meeting with the UN SDG Lab on actionable SDG implementation and enhancing partnership, making a contribution of policy literature such as "Malaysia's Foreign Policy Framework" to the UN Library in Geneva as well as engagement with OHCHR on Malaysia's Universal Periodic Review (UPR).



PANEL DISCUSSION ON GOOD GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

26 FEBRUARY 2020
12:00 PM - 1.30 PM
ROOM XXII,
PALAIS DES NATIONS

43RD SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

The Panel Discussion will examine the relationship between good governance and human rights, in particular women empowerment and gender equality as well as share best practices and challenges, with the aim of fulfilling the aspiration of leaving no one behind.

OPENING REMARKS

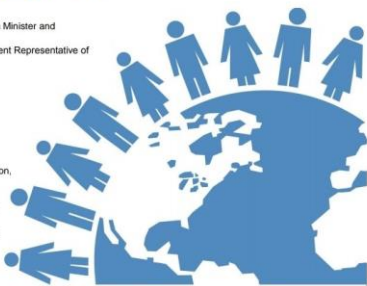
- Her Excellency Lolwah Rashid Al Khater, Assistant Foreign Minister and Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar
- His Excellency Dato' Dr. Ahmad Faisal Muhamad, Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the United Nations in Geneva

MODERATOR

- Mr. Jerald Joseph, Vice-Chairperson of National Human Rights Commission, Malaysia (SUHAKAM)

PANELLIST

- Datuk Dr. Anis Yusal Yusoff, Deputy Director-General of National Centre for Governance, Integrity and Anti-Corruption, Prime Minister's Department, Malaysia
- Mr. Todd Howland, Chief of Development, Economic and Social Issues Branch, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Mr. Shervin Majlessi, Chief of Conference Support Section, Corruption and Economic Crime Branch, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
- Ms. Fadous Bakhadda, Executive Director of Association Marocaine de Planification Familiale



The Permanent Mission, together with the Permanent Mission of Qatar, co-hosted a **Panel Discussion on Good Governance and Human Rights** at the sidelines of HRC43. The panel discussion examined the relationship between good governance and human rights, in particular women empowerment and gender equality. It provided an opportunity also to share best practises and challenges, with the aim of fulfilling the aspirations of leaving no one behind.

The Opening Remarks were made by H.E. Lolwah Rashid Al Khater, Assistant Foreign Minister and Foreign Ministry Spokesperson of Qatar; and H.E. Dato' Dr. Ahmad Faisal Muhamad, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the U.N. in Geneva.

The panellists were: Y.Bhg. Datuk Dr. Anis Yusal Yusoff, DDG of the National Centre for Governance, Integrity and Anti-Corruption; Mr. Todd Howland, OHCHR; Mr. Shervin Majlessi, UNODC; and Ms. Fadous Bakhadda, *Association Marocaine de Planification Familiale*.

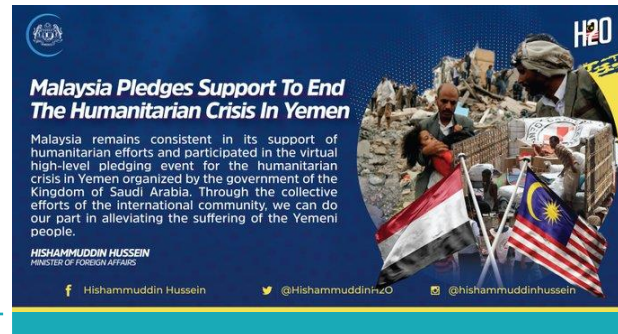
HUMANITARIAN



The Permanent Mission continued to participate actively in various humanitarian fora in Geneva throughout the first half of the year. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, several of these engagements were held virtually. Malaysia participated in the virtual **High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen** on 2 June 2020. Malaysia pledged USD 100,000 during the high-level pledging event. Malaysia conveyed its support for a cease-fire and the need for all parties to respect international humanitarian and human rights law.



Among various humanitarian-related engagements, Malaysia also participated in the launching of the 2020 Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis, during which Dato' PR highlighted Malaysia's contributions to the Rohingya in Cox's Bazar. Committed to finding sustainable solutions to the region's refugee problem, Malaysia continues to engage all stakeholders, including UNHCR and other UN agencies, based on mutual trust, understanding and in good faith.





Conference on Disarmament

The Conference on Disarmament opened its 2020 session on 20 January 2020 and was presided over by Algeria, Argentina, Australia and currently, Austria.

At the **High-Level Segment of the 2020 Session of the Conference on Disarmament**, Malaysia underscored that in order for the Conference to move forward, all Member States should demonstrate strong political will, combined with the readiness to compromise and exercise utmost flexibility. Malaysia also expressed its willingness to exercise flexibility and support to any effort towards revitalising the work of the Conference. In Malaysia's most recent engagement in June 2020 under the Austria's presidency, Malaysia reaffirmed that multilateralism is the core principle of negotiation in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation. Malaysia welcomed the President's aspiration to promote trust and confidence among CD Member States.

NPT Thematic Seminar on Disarmament 29-30 January 2020

Malaysia moderated a panel on "Achieving & maintaining a world free of nuclear weapons" and presented a topic on "Strengthening negative security assurances" during the Seminar.



50th Anniversary of the Entry Into Force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

On 19 May, Malaysia and 16 countries, namely Algeria, Austria, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, Indonesia, Ireland, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa and Thailand issued a Joint Communique to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the NPT. In the communique, the group of countries reaffirmed their past commitments agreed upon during previous NPT Review Conferences and called on other States Parties to do the same. They also underscored that the international peace and security will only be achieved through cooperation and concrete progress towards the goal of the NPT, which is a world without nuclear weapons.

In addition, they highlighted that the upcoming Review Conference of the NPT presents a timely opportunity for the States Parties to undertake a comprehensive review and assessment of the current status of the Treaty and the implementation of its three pillars as well as the previous obligations and commitments within its framework. They also emphasized that the Review Conference has the responsibility to identify additional areas and means for further concrete progress to be made in the future.

HEALTH



Global Efforts to Tackle COVID-19 Pandemic

With the World Health Organization (WHO) at the forefront in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, the Permanent Mission has been playing an active part in coordinating efforts between the WHO, the Ministry of Health of Malaysia and relevant domestic agencies.

H.E. Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Prime Minister of Malaysia, participated in Global Collaboration to Accelerate New COVID-19 Health Technologies, highlighting Malaysia's full support for this landmark global collaboration to accelerate development, production of tools and vaccines and equitable global access to new COVID-19 essential health technologies.

H.E. Dato' Seri Dr. Adham Baba, Minister of Health also participated in the **73rd World Health Assembly** on 18 May as well as the **WHO virtual information session** on 4 June 2020. He emphasized that as the international community adjusts to the "new normal" and social distancing, it was timely to strengthen regional cooperation for the post-pandemic period. He also emphasized that Malaysia welcomed research and development of medicines and vaccines through such mechanisms as the WHO Solidarity Trial. The Minister also gave a presentation on Malaysia's response to COVID-19 during the virtual information session.





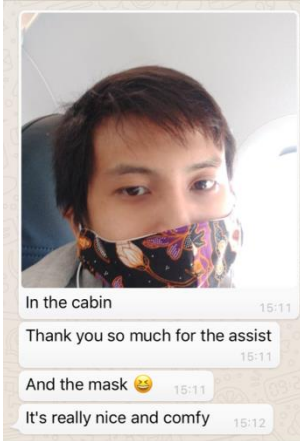
RESPONDING TO COVID-19



The Permanent Mission responded with the outbreak of COVID-19 with regular updates on its social media platforms of advisories and updates on Malaysian and Swiss measures taken to tackle the pandemic and its impact on Malaysians in Geneva, Vaud and Valais cantons, including those planning on travelling back to Malaysia during the lockdown period.



The Mission also rendered consular and various other forms of assistance to Malaysians stranded due to abrupt school closures, flight cancellations and transportation difficulties due to suspension of public transport and those facing difficulties crossing the French-Swiss border. The Mission continued to render consular assistance on an appointment basis. The Mission also participated in Malaysia's Diplomatic Equipment Stockpile (MDES).



ASEAN IN GENEVA



The ASEAN Committee in Geneva (ACG) witnessed the handing over of the ACG Chairmanship from Thailand to Viet Nam, which was held on Tuesday, 14 Jan during the first ACG Meeting of 2020. ASEAN PRs also exchanged views on pertinent issues and discussed initiatives to further profile ASEAN at International Geneva. The Viet Nam Ambassador reassured that Vietnam would continue its efforts in promoting unity, enhancing the role and contribution of ASEAN in international forums and requested ASEAN Member States to actively support Vietnam and make a common contribution to the success of ASEAN.

His Excellency Sek Wannamethee, Ambassador and PR of Thailand, as the then-ACG Chairman, hosted a farewell dinner for His Excellency Duong Chi Dung, Ambassador and PR of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam on 15 January 2020.

As a result of COVID-19, the second ACG Meeting was held virtually on 28 May 2020. Among the pertinent issues discussed was the recently concluded WHA73 as well as developments related to the Human Rights Council.



HIGHLIGHT IN PICTURES



Dato' PR with Mr. António Vitorino, Director General of International Organization for Migration (IOM)



Dato' PR with Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO)



Dato' PR with H.E. Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, President of the Human Rights Council



Dato' PR with H.E. Rachid Balbeki, former President of the Council on Disarmament



Dato' PR with H.E. Vaqif Sadikov, Chairman of the NAM Geneva Chapter



The home-based staff of the Permanent Mission of Malaysia to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva



The Lunar New Year event organized by MAG was an important opportunity to engage with the Malaysian community and exchange views in an informal setting



A *majlis tahlil* was organized at Rumah Malaysia for the families of home-based staff of both the Permanent Mission of Malaysia to the UN and to the WTO on 11 January 2020



Dato' PR hosted a dinner on 25 February 2020 for the Malaysian delegation to HRC43 as well as participants of the panel discussion on good governance and human rights



Dato' PR hosted dinner at Rumah Malaysia for H.E. Dato' Syed Mohd Hasrin Tengku Hussin, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the UN in New York and his delegation from capital, who were in Geneva to attend the NPT Thematic Seminar on Disarmament



Dato' PR hosted Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebration for the staff of the two Permanent Missions of Malaysia to the UN and to the WTO on 30 May 2020. The event marked the first social gathering for Malawakil Geneva after Swiss authorities eased restrictive measures on limiting size of gatherings to tackle COVID-19



Activities by PERWAKILAN Geneva in first half of 2020



First Perwakilan Geneva AJK Meeting
4 February 2020



Baju Kurung Making Session
10 May 2020



Making and Distribution of Reusable Face Masks
12 March 2020



Porcelain-Making Class at Ariana Museum
23 February 2020



Presentation of gifts with completion of al-Q'uran
recital at-home sessions during Ramadan, 16 May



Perwakilan Donation to Caravane De Solidarité
for those in need resulting from COVID-19
Pandemic in Geneva. 18 May 2020