



## **YOUTH PARTICIPATION KEY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT Global StandUp4HumanRights campaign celebrated in Malaysia**

**KUALA LUMPUR (10 DECEMBER 2019)** – Human Rights Day is celebrated every year on 10 December globally with Malaysia hosting a forum titled StandUp4HumanRights, co-organised by the Prime Minister’s Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), SUHAKAM, and the United Nations in Malaysia.

Launched by YB Datuk Liew Vui Keong, Minister in Prime Minister’s Department (Law) with Stefan Priesner, UN Resident Coordinator for Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam and Tan Sri Othman Hashim, Chairman of SUHAKAM, the commemoration saw over 350 participants from Government, Civil Society, Diplomatic Corps and private sector.

YB Datuk Liew Vui Keong, Law Minister in Prime Minister’s Department stressed that the government will continue to engage with stakeholders in the policy making process. He also highlighted some of the initiatives undertaken by the government namely the Freedom of Information legislation, the study on the abolishment of the mandatory death penalty, law reform agenda as well as the development of a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights.

Stefan Priesner, United Nations Resident Coordinator for Malaysia said, “I am encouraged by Malaysia’s furthering commitments to Human Rights, and there is a long way to go. To this end it is important to see development and human rights as two sides of the same coin. Hence it is important to pursue development in tandem with human rights. In this way we can sharpen the direction of development, make good governance more meaningful, and ensure that no-one is left behind.”

The Human Rights forum consisted of two sessions- with a youth focus , a panel and interactive session on views on Human Rights in Malaysia, followed by a discussion on future expectations for the progressive realisation of human rights. The main objectives of this forum are to promote public awareness and support for human rights and the work of various organisations including Government Agencies dedicated to promoting human rights. It is also aimed to promote the spirit of cooperation and interaction between various stakeholders including, but not limited to, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Tan Sri Othman Hashim, Chairman of SUHAKAM added, “From time to time, human rights proponents and defenders face seemingly insurmountable barriers or opposition along the way. Your passion and zeal in promoting and defending human rights in spite of the challenges or difficulties endured in the course of your work, I am sure, will make a difference. It will contribute to good governance and greater justice, dignity and equality and a better future for the country.”

The forum saw a keynote address by Activist and Writer, Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir and a special address by Tan Sri Tony Fernandes, AirAsia Group Sdn Bhd Chief Executive as well as speakers Dr Azmi Sharom, Deputy Chairman, Election Commission of Malaysia, Dato’ Seri Mohd Hishamudin Yunus and Dato’ Mah Weng Kwai, SUHAKAM Commissioners, Dr Farah Nini Dato’ Dusuki, Senior Lecturer, University Malaya, Datuk Emeritus Professor Dr Shad Saleem Faruqi, University Malaya, Dato' Ambiga Sreenevasan, Lawyer and Human Rights Advocate and Ms Shivani Verma, Human Rights Officer, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

In his global message, Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General called upon everyone to support and protect young people who are standing up for human rights, “We celebrate the role of young people in bringing human rights to life. Globally, young people are marching, organizing, and speaking out: For the right to a healthy environment, For the equal rights of women and girls, to participate in decision-making and to express their opinions freely... They are marching for their right to a future of peace, justice and equal opportunities. Every single person is entitled to all rights: civil, political, economic, social and cultural. Regardless of where they live. Regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, social origin, gender, sexual orientation, political or other opinion, disability or income, or any other status.”

Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a special video message acknowledged that the “participation by young people in shaping and making decisions will be critical to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, and to overcoming many challenges to human rights”.

In line with the focus on youth, the forum featured the introduction of a School Human Rights Module developed by SUHAKAM and Ministry of Education as well as a prize giving ceremony for SUHAKAM’s 2019 Human Rights Photography Competition.

The Post-PT3 Human Rights Module and Post-UPSR Human Rights Module were developed to introduce human rights principles and terminologies such as 'equality' and 'non-discrimination' to primary and secondary school students. In addition, the modules emphasize the concept of universality, inalienability, indivisibility and interrelatedness of human rights.

These modules contain practical activities intended to teach students about human rights, by taking into account the social and cultural context of Malaysia.

The SUHAKAM 2019 Human Rights Photography Competition was held from 1 July to 30 September 2019 which received 477 submissions. The main objective was to raise awareness and provide education on human rights among Malaysians, through photography artwork. The winner is Mohd Samsi bin Sumairi with his photo titled *Pupus*. Suzairi bin Zakaria comes in second with photo titled *Hak Yang Belum Selesai* and Hak Orang Kurang Upaya Di Jalan Raya by Chen Soon Ling come in third. The first prize winner received RM4,000; whilst the second and third prize winners, RM2,000 and RM1,000 respectively.

Dato' Nadzirah Osman, Deputy Secretary General of MoFA closed the forum by reiterating the Government's commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights both at home and globally. As an active member of the international community, Malaysia will continue engaging with the United Nations and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on this important agenda. Malaysia is also vying for a seat at the Human Rights Council for the term 2022 – 2024.

#### **Notes to the editor:**

#### **About Human Rights Day:**

The commemoration of Human Rights Day formally started in December 1950 through a General Assembly Resolution to celebrate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Declaration was adopted two years earlier in the aftermath of the Second World War, on 10 December 1948. It is celebrated on 10 December each year and has since become one of the most influential documents ever drafted in the history of mankind.