

WELCOMING REMARKS
BY
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HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 2016
“HUMAN RIGHTS IN MALAYSIA:
TOWARDS A DEVELOPED NATION STATUS”

8 DECEMBER 2016 (THURSDAY)

IDFR AUDITORIUM

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Assalammualaikum Warahmatullah Wabarakatuh

Good Morning and Salam 1Malaysia.

Yang Mulia Tengku Tan Sri Dato' Seri Ahmad Rithaudeen
President of UNAM

YBhg. Tan Sri Razali Ismail
Chairman of SUHAKAM and Deputy President of United Nations
Association Malaysia (UNAM)

Mr Jakob Simonsen
UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Represent *ad interim*

Distinguished Moderators and Panelists

Members of the Diplomatic Corp

Senior Officers of Wisma Putra and IDFR

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

1. It is a great pleasure to welcome you to this important event. My
gratitude to our co-organisers; the United Nations Association Malaysia

(UNAM), the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM), and the United Nations Country Team of Malaysia (UNCT) for their lead in encouraging meaningful dialogue on such an important subject. Human Rights is not just an academic subject but a living and evolving concern that affects our political, economic and social mores. Today's event reflects the importance we attach to Human Rights. We want to know more, we want to encourage dialogues and we also want to contribute towards greater understanding and more holistic approach to the subject.

2. Towards this end, I would also like to welcome UNAM, SUHAKAM and UNCT to future collaborations with IDFR. IDFR is expanding collaborations with other organisations as part of its transformation into both training and learning centre as it endeavors to offer quality training courses and topical intellectual discourses, seminars, fora and roundtables.

3. Thank you to all our distinguished moderators and panellists agreeing to share their ideas and views in today's panel discussions. We will be discussing two topics today First: **“Accession to Core International Human Rights Treaties-Where We Move From Here”** and Second: **“Human Rights in Malaysia-Towards a Developed Nation Status”**. The

combined knowledge, expertise and foresight of our panellists today will immensely contribute to our intellectual discourse and make this an engaging and meaningful event.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. On this important day, Malaysia stands together with the international community to celebrate the Global Human Rights Day of the United Nations. Today, we commemorate the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 as “a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations”. Drawing parallel to Malaysia’s own ambitions to achieve a developed nation status by 2020, the theme chosen for Human Rights Day this year is the aptly titled “**Human Rights in Malaysia: Towards a Developed Nation Status**”.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. Today, we celebrate the inherent rights of any human by virtue of being human. It is an inborn right that belongs to everyone from all walks of life despite belief, gender, race, age, color and status. It is a right that is

naturally ours, such as to the right to be free and equal, the right to a nationality, the right to democracy, the right to education, the rights for workers, and the freedom of thought. Human rights are there to protect the dignity of a human. This protection is reflected in the customary international law, coded in declarations, treaties, covenants and domestic laws and embraced in policies that we have today.

6. In the pursuit of development, however, many of these rights are at times neglected. As our ambitions get higher and many of our needs even more complex, we tend to forget that there are those left behind. Segments of society where people with less resource often find themselves denied of access to basic healthcare, job opportunities, and education.

7. As a developing nation, Malaysia faces the delicate task of balancing the need for development and the protection of human rights. We acknowledge that there is a need for a holistic approach to development, and we have strived to do just that. In Malaysia, our national laws and policies have been formulated to put the wellbeing of the *rakyat*, or the people, and the perseverance of our national integrity as our priorities. Many initiatives undertaken by the Government, such as the Government

Transformation Programme and the Economic Transformation Programme, have been crafted to address development concerns such as eradication of poverty and uplifting the standard and quality of life. Addressing the gaps in society will help us to counter the pitfalls of development and ensuring the dignity of human life. As competition gets more stiff, we need to strike a balance between being highly productive and upholding the basic rights of our people. To this end, our laws and policies are constantly evolving, albeit not too fast, to cater to the ever changing nature of the society.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

8. Malaysia is committed to the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and incorporation of measures to achieve the SDGs which integrated all 17 goals which are related to human rights principles and standards. The Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, YAB Dato' Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahidi, at the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September this year has expressly stated Malaysia's commitment to integrate the SDGs as part of the national outcomes under the Eleventh Malaysia Plan. To serve as an overarching and guiding policy for Malaysia's sustainable development, Malaysia is also

formulating a National SDG Roadmap, establishing a broad-based and inclusive committee to oversee the implementation and monitoring of SDGs.

9. The recent 8th ASEAN-United Nations Summit held in Vientiane, Lao PDR, has also placed emphasis on the promotion of peace, prosperity and human rights in the world. The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki Moon has lauded the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action as an opportunity to promote peace, prosperity and human rights, complimentary to the ASEAN's Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda. This falls in line with ASEAN's undergoing efforts to promote the importance and protection of human rights at the national, regional and international levels, and the need to strengthen the collaboration between the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) and the UN in areas of mutual interest.

10. This partnership could enhance the promotion and protection of human rights, especially the rights of women and children through exchanges of best practices and capacity building, as well as promoting

ASEAN's interest and welfare in line with the ASEAN Community Vision 2025.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. There are bound to be challenges old and new in this increasingly difficult environment. Nevertheless, Malaysia is committed to become a developed nation and to the protection of human rights. It is our hope and aspiration that while we are striving for economic growth and prosperity, the wellbeing of the *rakyat* are also elevated to a higher standard. These two elements - development and human rights - should be mutually reinforced for us to have a better, meaningful future.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. I hope that today's panel discussion will provide valuable insights and inputs into promoting Human Rights in Malaysia: Towards a Developed Nation Status and I encourage everyone to actively participate in the ensuing discussions and help us to achieve our goals in a holistic manner that benefits all.

13. In conclusion, let me once again express my sincerest appreciation to our distinguished moderators and panelists and thank you all for attending this important event.

Thank you.