



Malaysia

Permanent Mission to the United Nations

(Please check against delivery)

**STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE SENATOR BOON SOM INONG
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA
ON AGENDA ITEM 66: RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE OF
THE 67TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK, 22 OCTOBER 2012**

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, Malaysia wishes to extend its appreciation to the UN Secretary General for his report A/67/273, entitled "Evaluation of the progress made in the achievement of the goal and objectives of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People". Malaysia also welcomes the reports A/67/301 and A/67/221 on the same issue, concerning the rights of indigenous peoples. These reports highlight, among others, the need to include indigenous peoples in the sustainable development agenda, the need to harmonize activities affecting indigenous peoples within the UN system, and on the improvement of the collection and disaggregation of data concerning indigenous peoples.

Mr. Chairman,

2. In Malaysia's aim to become a developed, high-income nation by 2020, the Government intends to ensure all members of its multicultural and multifaceted society, including its indigenous peoples, equally enjoy the benefits of development. With the theme of "Prospering the Nation, Enhancing the Wellbeing of the People: A Promise Fulfilled", the National Budget of 2013 was crafted to enhance the people's quality of life, and to ensure sustainable economic growth. On this basis, the overall objective of the Malaysian Budget for 2013 is to prioritize the wellbeing of the Malaysian people, especially the indigenous communities. Accordingly, a total of USD29 million has been allocated for the infrastructure development of indigenous communities. This would surely benefit and improve the quality of life of all rural people, including the indigenous peoples in Malaysia.

Mr. Chairman,

3. Reflecting the observation in the Secretary-General's report on the need to enhance the knowledge, capacity and operationalization of policies concerning indigenous communities, Malaysia remains committed to strengthening the effectiveness of relevant public authorities, namely the Department of Indigenous

Peoples Development, and the respective state and district offices, which are tasked to protect the welfare of indigenous peoples.

4. The Department of Indigenous Peoples Development operates through three main programs, namely the Arranged Placement, Economic Development, and Social Development Programs. The initiatives under the Arranged Placement Program include village restructuring and natural disaster projects. The Economic Development Program provides, among others, entrepreneur guidance, income increment program, and Citizen Wellbeing Development Scheme. On the other hand, the programs supported under Social Development include housing aids and projects to improve infrastructures and public facilities.

Mr. Chairman,

5. Malaysia fully agrees on the need for Governments to consult with indigenous peoples in formulating policies, promulgating legislation, drawing up programs and implementing projects. This is necessary, as the indigenous peoples are the principal stakeholders in the process and any policies or programs would directly affect their lives. Consultations would allow policymakers a greater understanding on the effects of their policies and programs. Therefore, the Malaysian Government sees value in communication to realize the full potential of those policies and programs. Malaysia also encourages multi-stakeholder initiatives, which would involve all segments of society, that is, from the government and NGOs, to the private sector and corporations, which are aimed to enhance the welfare of indigenous communities.

6. Projects that have positively affected the lives of indigenous peoples include health and medical services through the programs of Flying Doctors and Mobile Clinic. Other beneficial programs include those aimed to reduce the educational gap among indigenous students, such as through outreach program, and the modification of the education tailored to the needs and background of indigenous students.

7. Malaysia also supports efforts to mainstream the views of indigenous peoples, as reflected in the theme of our national-level celebration of the International Day of World's Indigenous Peoples in the State of Sarawak held on 9 to 11 August 2012. With the theme "Indigenous Media, Empowering Indigenous Voices", this year's celebration recognizes the role of today's media in providing channels for indigenous peoples to highlight the problems and challenges affecting their communities. Under this theme, the celebration encouraged for the effective use of media in promoting best practices toward establishing a more sustainable model of development for indigenous peoples.

Mr. Chairman,

8. On 12 May 2012, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia began its series of nationwide public hearings on the issue of land rights affecting the country's indigenous peoples. The public hearings were the first of its kind in Malaysia, involving officials

from the relevant government and statutory agencies, which participated to provide explanations and the required information concerning the issue.

9. Through the public hearings, the Commission received cases and complaints from indigenous peoples relating to, among others, land trespassing, administration of commercial projects, water catchment, and forest reserve. The Commission also considered the concerns raised by indigenous communities about timber logging activities, pollution, and private estates.

10. The public hearings allowed indigenous communities to directly reach out to the relevant government bodies and civil society groups in their call for adequate policy guidelines and recommendations. The findings as a result thereof provided useful insights into the challenges faced by indigenous peoples so as to allow the Government to respond appropriately. We want to assure the world that we are cognizant of the challenges faced by the Malaysian indigenous peoples, and that the Government, with the support of the private sector and non-governmental organizations, are doing more every year to overcome these challenges.

Mr. Chairman,

11. As Malaysia pursues the path of progress towards becoming a high-income nation by 2020, policy-makers hold the responsibility to recognize and address the needs of all segments of society, including the country's estimated 150,000 indigenous peoples. By committing sufficient technical and financial resources in advancing indigenous communities, as well as moving ahead to resolve all problems in close consultations with all stakeholders, we sincerely believe the rights of the indigenous people, including the right to development and cultural rights, would be safeguarded.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.