



# MALAYSIA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT BY  
MR. MOHD SUHAIMI AHMAD TAJUDDIN  
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES a.i.  
PERMANENT MISSION OF MALAYSIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETING OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
ON THE GLOBAL LAUNCH OF  
THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES**

**NEW YORK, 1 FEBRUARY 2019**

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Madame President,

1. At the outset, Malaysia joins other delegations in expressing its appreciation and congratulation to you, Madame President for convening today's event.
2. Malaysia would also like to thank Bolivia and Ecuador for facilitating the successful adoption A/RES/73/156 which led to the convening of a high-level event today in commemoration of the International Year of Indigenous Languages. Malaysia had joined 37 other countries that co-sponsored the resolution.
3. Malaysia aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Madame President,

4. Malaysia is a melting pot of diversity and multiculturalism in the Southeast Asia region. The rich mix of ethnicity, religions and historical influences is vibrantly displayed by the nation's lively culture and society. The indigenous peoples of Malaysia, the *Orang Asli* of the Peninsular Malaysia and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak make up about 13 percent

of the national population. Their culturally-rich lifestyle contributes immensely to the diversity of the country.

5. Malaysia is therefore proud to join others in the official global launch event co-organised by UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), UN Department of Economic and the Social Affairs (UNDESA) and members of Steering Committee on 28 January 2019 in UNESCO House, Paris.

Madame President,

6. As Malaysia advances towards becoming a developed nation, we also recognize that indigenous communities are adjusting themselves to the development progression. Some of them, who wish to preserve as much as possible their own way of life, customs, traditions, beliefs and language, have chosen to reside in their respective villages and surroundings while others have migrated to urban areas for various reasons ranging from employment to exposure. Nonetheless, with the support from the Government of Malaysia, many efforts have been undertaken to preserve their own sense of identity and dignity whilst at the same time providing all the relevant facilities needed such as schools and medical clinics. To this end, it has always been in the heart of the Malaysian government to ensure the rights of the indigenous people are not neglected, be it in terms of economic, cultural, social or political rights.

Madame President,

7. Malaysia via our local universities in Sabah and Sarawak, had the opportunity to work with non-profit organisations that are committed to build capacity for sustainable language development through research, translation, training, documentation and materials development. These partnerships have helped in discovering how language development addresses the challenging aspects – social, cultural, political, economic and spiritual.

8. In 2011, sixty participants mainly from the ethnolinguistic communities of Sabah and Sarawak took part in a workshop which provided training for language documentation software from SIL

International, a non-profit organization committed to serving language communities worldwide as they build capacity for sustainable language development. The workshop was held at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and co-sponsored by the Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning at UMS, the Kadazandusun (one of the diverse ethnics in Sabah) Chair of UMS, the UMS Association of Mixed-Methoda Researches and SIL Malaysia. This workshop has provided opportunities for researchers to discuss issues pertaining to language and culture documentation.

Madame President,

9. Malaysia recognizes the common issues and the unique risks that affect indigenous peoples. Taking this into account, Malaysia has put in place a 5-year strategic plan, the latest for a period between 2016-2020, for its Department of Orang Asli Development which outlines, among others, various cultural programmes to ensure that the unique culture of the indigenous people, including its languages, will continue to be preserved and sustained for future generations.

Thank you.