



Malaysia

Permanent Mission to the United Nations

**STATEMENT BY
MS. FARISHA SALMAN, REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA**

**ON
AGENDA ITEM 66 (A): RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE
AND
AGENDA ITEM 66 (B): SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS
PEOPLE
OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE
66TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK, 17 OCTOBER 2011**

Mr. Chairman,

On 13 September 2007, Malaysia joined 143 other countries which voted in favour of the General Assembly Resolution 61/295 to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration was significant as it recognized the whole spectrum of individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples. The Declaration sets out the principles and standards to which all stakeholders should strive for. For Malaysia, ensuring the protection of the rights and the development of our indigenous populations has always been a national priority, and we have undertaken various efforts in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

2. Malaysia is home to a substantial number of indigenous groups. The relevant public authority, the Department of *Orang Asli* Development (JAKOA), has been given the responsibility to protect the welfare and manage the development of the natives in the Peninsular of Malaysia.

3. As citizens of Malaysia, indigenous groups are entitled to the same rights as other ethnic groups. Harmonious relations between the indigenous people and the rest of the Malaysian population is important and continue to contribute to the stability of Malaysia, as well as promoting multicultural diversity in an increasingly pluralistic country.

Mr. Chairman,

4. The main legal provisions, which guarantee the rights of indigenous populations and govern their welfare, are contained in the Malaysian Constitution and the Indigenous Peoples Act of 1954. The latter is an act that provides for the protection, wellbeing and advancement of the aboriginal people in Malaysia. Malaysia believes that all races and groups, without discrimination, should be able to enjoy benefits provided by the State. Article 8 of Malaysia's Federal Constitution which deals with the right to equality, does not prohibit or invalidate any law for the protection, wellbeing or advancement of the indigenous peoples of the Malay Peninsula and the natives of Sabah and Sarawak. This includes the reservation of lands or the reservation to the indigenous people of a reasonable proportion of suitable positions in the public service. Thus, it implicitly authorizes certain affirmative action in favour of the indigenous.

Mr. Chairman,

5. The most significant challenge which besets Malaysia today is encouraging them to move forward in the globalized world and integrating them into mainstream society. In line with this, Malaysia has developed comprehensive policies and strategies for the development of indigenous people which focuses on uplifting the status and quality of life of the community via socioeconomic programmes. At the same time, the Government has given priority to help them preserve their traditional cultural heritage.

6. The Government has also introduced income-generating programmes, namely agro-politan projects and other commercial agricultural activities for the advancement of the indigenous people. The indigenous groups in remote areas are provided with training on agricultural farming and practices to enhance their skills and knowledge which would help increase productivity and the income of the family in the long run.

7. Indigenous groups are also given equal opportunity for education. Students from the Penan ethnic group, for example, are provided the necessary assistance for them to attend schools and are given education aid that include, stationeries, school uniforms, the Tuition Aid Scheme (TAS) and the Supplementary Food Programme (SFP). The Government is confident that education would promote the economic, social and cultural rights for the people and the country as a whole, thus integrate the group into mainstream society.

Mr. Chairman,

8. One of the continuous efforts by the Government, through the National Registration Department and cooperation from the local authorities in the states, is to ensure that everyone is registered and issued with a national identity card and other personal identification documents, particularly those in the remote areas. This is one of the basic human rights for the natives that would enable them to seek employment and to register in government schools and to sit for public exams, among others. In this regard, the National Registration Department has set up mobile units to assist the indigenous groups to obtain such documents, without discrimination of all races, sex or religion, particularly in remote areas. The Government has also targeted full registration of indigenous people by the end of this year.

Mr. Chairman,

9. The development and welfare of the indigenous people of Malaysia continue to be an important Government agenda. Currently, there are 190,000 indigenous people nationwide. For the 2012 National Budget, the Government has allocated USD 29 million for the provision of basic necessities which include expanding the clean water supply project as well as income generating programmes.

10. Indigenous groups in Malaysia continue to receive special attention from the Government with the aspiration to integrate them into the mainstream of society and national development. The Government is sensitive to their needs in order to further protect their interests. This is in line with our national agenda of 'People First, Performance Now' which aspires to create a caring society in a multiracial country.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.