



MALAYSIA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS



CANDIDATE
to the
UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY COUNCIL
for the term 2015-2016

(Please check against delivery)

STATEMENT BY
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CHARGE D'AFFAIRES
PERMANENT MISSION OF MALAYSIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON AGENDA ITEM 66: RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE

68TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK, 21 OCTOBER 2013

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation to the Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples for their briefing and for the latter's report to the Committee. Malaysia is of the view that the report of the Special Rapporteur provides a feasible framework in deliberating the issue on the rights of indigenous peoples.

Mr. Chairman,

2. As Malaysia aims to become a developed, high-income nation by 2020, the Government ensures that all members of its multicultural and multifaceted society, including its indigenous peoples, equally enjoy the benefits of development. Malaysia's various indigenous communities enjoy equal protection under the Federal Constitution and other laws, including the Aboriginal Peoples Act of 1954. In Peninsula Malaysia, the Negrito, Senoi and Proto Malay indigenous communities are collectively and officially referred to as *Orang Asli*, while in East Malaysia the term "natives of Sabah and Sarawak" is used.

3. The overall objective of the Malaysian Budget for 2013 is to prioritize the wellbeing of the Malaysian people, especially the indigenous communities. As such, a total of USD 29 million has been allocated for the infrastructure development of indigenous communities, to improve the quality of life of all rural people, including the indigenous peoples in Malaysia. Furthermore, the Government recognizes that in relative terms, the *Orang Asli* and other indigenous communities are socioeconomically disadvantaged compared to other segments of the population. In this context, the Government has set itself the target of further reducing poverty among the *Orang Asli* to 25 per cent in 2015.

Mr. Chairman,

4. Malaysia remains committed to strengthening the effectiveness of relevant public authorities, namely the Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA), and the respective state and district offices, which are responsible for the welfare and advancement of these communities. Towards ensuring that the rights of *Orang Asli* and other indigenous communities remain promoted and protected, the Government continues to take measures to widen their access to food, shelter, health, education and employment, among others.

5. In line with the country's vision to be a developed nation by 2020, the Government has developed comprehensive policies and strategies for the development of the *Orang Asli* which focuses on uplifting their socioeconomic status and quality of life. Among others, steps taken towards this end include provision of education and skills training, infrastructure facilities, electricity and water supply and poverty eradication efforts.

6. The Government has also introduced income-generating programmes namely agropolitan 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 in agriculture plantations. In the long run, benefits derived from these programmes would help increase the income of the family.

Mr. Chairman,

7. Malaysia 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.

8. On 12 May 2012, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) 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. 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. In August 2013, SUHAKAM released a report entitled

“National Inquiry into the Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples” which outlined 18 recommendations. The Government of Malaysia has announced that it will set up a special task force to look into the outcome of the inquiry and raise the recommendations with the relevant government agencies.

Mr. Chairman,

10. 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.