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**STATEMENT BY
H.E. AMBASSADOR HUSSEIN HANIFF
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ON AGENDA ITEM 65: RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE**

NEW YORK, 20 OCTOBER 2014

Madam Chair,

Almost one month ago, the General Assembly had witnessed Member States' renewed, unwavering and relentless commitment in promoting and protecting the rights of the indigenous peoples. We had adopted an Outcome Document at the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples that provides a sound framework as we deliberate the many issues concerning the indigenous peoples.

Madam Chair,

2. As we joined consensus with all Member States of the UN, Malaysia had also announced its strong support towards an action-oriented Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples. We recognized that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is politically binding; and we acknowledged that UNDRIP enforces a moral obligation for Governments not to act inconsistently with its provisions.

3. The Malaysian Government continues to formulate, deliberate and implement programmes for the advancement of the socio-economic development of our indigenous peoples. We aim to become a developed, high-income nation by 2020, and the Government ensures that all members of its multicultural and multifaceted society, including its indigenous peoples, equally enjoy the benefits of development. On the issue of rights of indigenous peoples, Malaysia's various indigenous communities enjoy equal protection under the Federal Constitution and other relevant laws, including the Aboriginal Peoples Act of 1954.

Madam Chair,

4. Most states, including Malaysia, are faced with the challenge of balancing the need for development. Development is vital to improve the livelihood and full enjoyment of human rights of our people. At the same time, it is important for us to recognize that in most cases, indigenous groups are amongst the most disadvantaged communities, due to their way of life and, to a certain extent, remoteness. Continuous engagement with the community is therefore crucial to ensure that indigenous groups are not left behind in the national development agenda.

5. That said, Malaysia continues to implement holistic and inclusive development programmes as well as encourage the direct participation of indigenous peoples in the national development agenda. The Government, in providing an enabling environment for the direct participation of indigenous peoples, recognized the importance of preserving the cultures and traditions of the indigenous peoples in the context of the rapidly evolving socio-economic scenario in Malaysia.

6. My delegation is pleased to share that among others, the Government has introduced income-generating programmes and commercial agricultural activities tailored specifically for the indigenous communities to further spur their socio-economic advancement.

7. These programmes and activities had significantly contributed to Malaysia's success in reducing the incidence of poverty among the indigenous peoples. Through these programmes, the incidence of poverty among indigenous peoples was reduced from 83.4% in 2005 to only 31.16% in 2010, a considerable achievement within the span of five years. The Government has also set itself the target of further reducing poverty among the indigenous peoples to 25 per cent in 2015.

Madam Chair,

8. Moving on to other challenges affecting indigenous people in Malaysia, the Government recognized that indigenous people's system of rights and obligations are very much intertwined with their lands. This is very much reflected in their subsistence, spirituality, social organisation, identity and culture.

9. The Government is currently engaged in series of consultations with state authorities, agencies and indigenous groups following the release of a report entitled "National Inquiry into the Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples" which outlined 18 recommendations by National Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM) in August 2013. These consultations are the culmination of nationwide public hearings held since 2012 on the issue of land rights affecting the country's indigenous peoples.

Madam Chair,

10. Before I conclude, my delegation wishes to reaffirm Malaysia's commitment to continue to promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples. 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 will also continue to approach the subject of advancing indigenous communities through close consultations with all stakeholders, particularly the indigenous peoples themselves.

Thank you, Madam Chair.