



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA (SUHAKAM)

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**ORAL STATEMENT
UNITED NATIONS EXPERT MECHANISM ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
VIRTUAL REGIONAL MEETING ON
“THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES UNDER THE
UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES”
1 DECEMBER 2020**

Madam Chair, honorable members of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), ladies and gentlemen. Greetings from the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Malaysian Government has undertaken several measures to contain the spread of the pandemic within the country. These included the imposition of movement control orders (MCO), closure of public and private premises including learning institutions and government premises, except for those providing essential services.

Due to the movement control orders, certain segments of the indigenous peoples lost their income especially those who depend mainly on daily sales of forest produce and daily wage from plantation jobs in the agricultural sector. The food aid distribution by the Government was not comprehensive enough as the scheme was confined only to villages registered in the Government's system. Indigenous peoples were also unable to equally benefit from the Government's economic stimulus packages due to the pre-existing lack of internet infrastructures and language barriers, among other reasons.

As students in the rest of the country, the youth and children in rural areas were unable to attend schools as the schools were closed, the opportunity for them to continue their studies were hampered due to the lack of internet infrastructure and technological facilities. The indigenous women also faced limited access to reproductive healthcare during the MCO period and it was further compounded by their remote locations and tribal views on family planning.

The Commission has made several recommendations to the Malaysian Government for their consideration, including the following:

- i. Establish a post-MCO recovery fund to support and recover the indigenous peoples' livelihoods;



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- ii. Ensure automatic registration of the indigenous peoples as recipients of the Government's aid;
- iii. Provide financial support and necessary facilities to enable remote learning for indigenous youth and children;
- iv. Include indigenous peoples' representatives in emergency and health response committees, both during and after the pandemic.

The Commission, with the cooperation of the European Union and local non-governmental organisations work closely together in distributing aid to the vulnerable communities and conduct capacity building workshops to enhance their livelihood skills.

Finally, the Commission calls on the Malaysian Government to take the necessary steps towards progressively achieving the full realization of the economic and social rights of the indigenous peoples as provided under Article 21 of UNDRIP.