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**STATEMENT BY
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MALAYSIAN DELEGATION TO THE
SUB-COMMISSION ON PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION
AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES
WORKING GROUP ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS
THIRTEENTH SESSION**

ON ITEM 5

**REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS PERTAINING TO THE
PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

Geneva; 26 July, 1995

Thank you Madam Chairperson,

I am representing the Malaysian Government and would like to make some intervention on item 5 of the provisional agenda "Review of Developments pertaining to the promotion and protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People".

Madam Chairperson,

In the Malaysian context the Indigenous population consist of the Malays, the native peoples from Sabah and Sarawak and the "Orang Asli". These are the indigenous communities as their forefathers and ancestors have been the natives of the land since historical time. Malaysia is a nation comprise largely of the indigenous people, the majority of whom have made significant progress in the socio.economic fields and have achieved significant improvements in their well-being.

It is to be noted however, that there are still a segment of the indigenous populations that continues to lag behind others. In this regard the government has taken comprehensive steps to address the situation. Various policies and programmes are carried out to assist them to improve their well-being. These programmes are aimed at providing the indigenous people with better access to education,

health care services, training and various other socio-economic programmes to facilitate them to be effective participants and active partners to the development process.

The progress of these programmes has been very encouraging. A significant number of the indigenous population have attained success in the areas of education, training, and other achievements in various socio-economic fields. All these transition process have been achieved while the indigenous people continue to preserve their culture and tradition. The role of the government has been and continue to be as facilitator and promotor, and the indigenous people is free to make their own choice.

The vital question before us is one of choice. It is clear to us that the indigenous people, given the choice, would want to have a standard of living comparable with other communities. They want to be assured of their future, being able to send their children to school, participate in the national process and be recognised as people in their own right. The government will continue to be guided by this understanding in developing and implementing policies and programmes for the indigenous people.

There is no comfort in the status quo and the indigenous people should not continue to be regarded as merely primitives with no sense of expectations of their own and with regard to the future. They are part and parcel of the society and they must be accorded the same rights and privileges as the others.

Malaysia have gone through various periods in history - through colonialism and independence, and presently in the process of rapid economic growth and development. The indigenous population in Malaysia will continue to be given priority attention. It is important to note however, that there are examples as reflected before this meeting that some indigenous society in some countries where they have been denied their rights to improve their socio-economic well-being and as full partners to development. Consequently they continue to suffer and lag behind the others. This should be the basic and fundamental issue before us that should be given full attention.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.