



**MEDIA STATEMENT  
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA (SUHAKAM)**

**EDITOR, NEWS DESK**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**PRESS STATEMENT**

**SEMPORNA, SABAH (7 SEPTEMBER 2023)** – In the noteworthy event today, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM), the Indonesia National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM), and the Commission on the Human Rights of the Philippines (CHRP) has renewed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Finding Durable Solutions to the Statelessness Issues in Sabah. This MoU, formerly known as the MoU on Statelessness Issues in Sabah, will span a period of five years from 2023 to 2028.

The MoU was first signed between SUHAKAM and Komnas HAM in April 2019, with CHRP as an official observer. It was then renewed twice, extending to December 2022, with all three parties officially involved. Throughout the previous MoU action plan, the official parties carried out various initiatives including high-level meetings with Chief Minister of Sabah and relevant government agencies, issuance of a joint statement, organizing an online dialogue on statelessness, and a visit to a displaced persons center in the Philippines.

The renewal of the MoU for five years shows the commitments of all parties of the MoU to intensify existing partnerships through collaboration with Governments and all stakeholders with the aim to find durable solutions towards improving the human rights situation of stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness in Sabah. Building on previous efforts, the parties to the MoU agree to place a larger focus on awareness raising given the lack of understanding and misconception among the general public and stakeholders towards the stateless population in Sabah.

Regardless of their status, the undocumented, stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness share similar experience. These include being denied access to essential human rights such as healthcare, education, and means of livelihood. This often makes them vulnerable targets of human trafficking, exploitation, harassment and forced labour.

SUHAKAM hopes that the MoU will serve as a platform, enabling stakeholders to openly discuss these challenging issues and enhance public sensitivity. Working together, the aim is to improve the situation for stateless persons and those at risk of statelessness in Sabah and, if possible, to find durable solutions to these long-standing issues.

Apart from the signing ceremony, SUHAKAM, Komnas HAM, and CHRP will be visiting the stateless community in Omadal Island and Mabul Island to engage with the community and to further assess their situation. In this regard, SUHAKAM wishes to express our appreciation to the Semporna District Office, the Eastern Sabah Security Command and the Royal Malaysian Police for facilitating this visit.

**-END-**

**Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)  
7 September 2023**