



WELCOMING SPEECH
By
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Mesyuarat Membincangkan Akses Orang Kurang Upaya (OKU) Kepada Penyertaan Penuh Dalam Sistem Pilihanraya Malaysia
Meeting on Inclusive Access of Persons with Disabilities to the Electoral System
10 February 2026
9.00 am – 1.00 pm
Inquiry Room, SUHAKAM.

Good morning and warm greetings to everyone.

Distinguished leaders and representatives of organisations of persons with disabilities, fellow civil society colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome all of you to this meeting today. SUHAKAM is especially pleased to be in the company of **disability leaders and activists who bring extensive knowledge, lived experience, and long-standing advocacy** on issues relating to political participation and electoral inclusion.

Your presence here is extremely important. You are not only representatives of organisations, but also **experts by experience**. The experiences you face before elections, on polling day, and throughout civic life are crucial to shaping reforms that are realistic, effective, and rooted in rights.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As Malaysia's National Human Rights Institution, **SUHAKAM derives its mandate from Section 4 of the SUHAKAM Act**, which entrusts the Commission with the responsibility to promote and protect human rights, to advise the Government, and to review laws, policies and administrative practices to ensure compliance with human rights standards.

In the context of persons with disabilities, this mandate must be read alongside Malaysia's Persons with Disabilities Act, which recognises the right to accessibility. **Accessibility goes beyond buildings** to include public facilities, transportation,

¹ Prepared by Sarah Adibah Hamzah (Officer, Law and International Treaties Division) on 10th February 2026.

information and communication, education, employment, cultural life, recreation, and public participation. Ensuring these rights is **crucial to fair participation in the election process.**

These domestic obligations are reinforced by international standards, including:

- **Article 9 of the CRPD on Accessibility,**
- **Article 29 of the CRPD on participation in political and public life,**
- **Article 2² and Article 21³ of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,** and
- the **Sustainable Development Goals,** particularly **Goal 10 on reducing inequalities** and **Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities.**

Building on these frameworks, it's important to remember that accessibility and political participation are essential human rights. **They should not be considered optional; instead, they are fundamental to ensuring everyone can participate fully.**

Participants,

At its core, the Government bears several key responsibilities in this area.

First, it is important to **ensure that everyone with disabilities has the same right to vote,** be elected, hold public office, and take part in public functions at all levels of government, just like everyone else.

Second, it must ensure that the **entire electoral process is accessible and inclusive.** This includes voting procedures, polling facilities, and election materials. Additionally, it should promote the use of assistive and emerging technologies to support voters with disabilities.

² **For reference: Article 2 is on non-discrimination on the basis of political opinion.**

Read full provision here: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

³ **For reference: Article 21 is on the right to election.**

Here is the full provision

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Third, it must **protect the secrecy and freedom of the vote**. It should ensure that persons with disabilities can express their political will without intimidation or undue influence..

Fourth, **it must provide reasonable accommodation during voting**. This includes allowing voters with disabilities, upon request, to receive assistance from a person of their choice. Such assistance should fully respect the voter's autonomy, secrecy, and dignity.

Finally, the Government has a **duty to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in public and political life** more broadly. This includes their involvement within political parties, civil society, and as candidates in general and state elections. It is essential that this participation take place in an environment free of discrimination.

Ladies and gentlemen,

SUHAKAM is convening this meeting for several important reasons.

First, **Malaysia is a State Party to the CRPD**. Therefore has binding international obligations to ensure the effective implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities, including political participation under Article 29.

Second, consistent with its mandate, **SUHAKAM has a responsibility to advise and guide the Government** in aligning laws, policies and administrative practices with human rights standards, considering both international norms and the domestic legal context.

Third, there now exists a **clear and detailed international indicator framework** developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. These indicators provide an objective, evidence-based basis for assessing, monitoring, and strengthening Malaysia's implementation of Article 29 of the CRPD.

And finally, this meeting reflects a core human rights principle: **meaningful participation**. Any law, policy or reform affecting persons with disabilities must be developed **with the direct involvement of persons with disabilities themselves**, particularly through Organisations of Persons with Disabilities. This is fundamental to inclusive and credible democratic governance.

Participants,

We very much look forward to your input today. Your views, experiences and recommendations will directly inform the development of a **Policy Brief**, which SUHAKAM intends to present to the **Parliamentary Select Committee on Human Rights, Elections and Institutional Reforms**.

This is an important opportunity to ensure that the realities faced by persons with disabilities are translated into **concrete legislative and institutional recommendations** for Parliament to consider in its legislative role.

In closing,

Let me reaffirm SUHAKAM's commitment to working **in partnership with organisations of persons with disabilities**, in the spirit of respect, equality and shared responsibility.

We thank you for your willingness to engage constructively, and we look forward to a productive discussion that will contribute meaningfully to **inclusive electoral reform and a more equitable democracy in Malaysia**.

Thank you.