



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH ETHICAL AND RESPONSIBLE MEDIA

KUALA LUMPUR (11 MARCH 2026) - In an era where digital narratives can either empower or endanger women and girls, ethical and responsible media practices are more critical than ever. Therefore, in conjunction with International Women's Day 2026 on 8 March, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) and the Malaysian Media Council (MMM) jointly reaffirm our shared commitment to advancing gender equality, safeguarding human dignity, and strengthening ethical and responsible media practices in Malaysia.

International Women's Day serves as a timely reminder that equality and non-discrimination must be reflected not only in law and policy, but also in public discourse. The media play a powerful role in shaping societal attitudes, influencing narratives, and reinforcing or challenging harmful stereotypes. As such, strengthening gender-responsive and rights-respecting media practices are essential to building a more inclusive and just society.

Following constructive engagement between both institutions, SUHAKAM and MMM have expressed their intention to strengthen dialogue and cooperation at the intersection of human rights and media governance. This engagement reflects the complementary roles of both institutions and shared recognition that ethical journalism and human rights protection are mutually reinforcing.

SUHAKAM, established under the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia Act 1999 (Act 597), is mandated to promote and protect human rights, including equality, dignity, and freedom of expression. MMM, established under the Media Council Act 2025 (Act 868), is an independent statutory body responsible for upholding ethical journalism, administering the Media Council Code of Conduct, managing complaints on unethical media practices, and strengthening public trust in the media. This engagement recognises the independence and statutory mandates of both institutions while encouraging dialogue in the public interest.

Areas of potential collaboration may include joint capacity-building initiatives, the possible development of training modules, and the exploration of a working group to consider media ethics through a gender lens.

In this regard, both institutions intend to explore ways to:

- Promote gender and child sensitive as well as ethical media standards;
- Encourage responsible reporting on issues affecting women, children and other vulnerable communities.

- Support safer working environments for journalists, particularly women journalists, and addressing harassment and intimidation in the course of reporting.
- Strengthen institutional dialogue on complaints, accountability, and governance; and
- Enhance awareness of the role of media in advancing equality and preventing harm.

These initiatives are broadly aligned with Malaysia’s commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which underscore the importance of addressing harmful stereotyping, gender-based discrimination, and violence through preventive and educational approaches.

Recent trends in online harassment and gendered misinformation underscore the urgency of this initiative. As Malaysia navigates an evolving media landscape shaped by digital transformation, misinformation, and emerging technologies, media freedom must continue to be exercised with responsibility and respect for human dignity. Upholding ethical standards while safeguarding freedom of expression is fundamental to democratic accountability and public trust.

In commemorating International Women’s Day, SUHAKAM and MMM call upon media practitioners, editors, policymakers, and the public to collectively foster a media environment that promotes equality, fairness, and respect. Advancing women’s rights and strengthening ethical journalism are shared responsibilities that require sustained commitment towards rights, justice and action.

Melissa Akhir, SUHAKAM Commissioner, said:

“International Women’s Day reminds us of the importance of fostering a media environment that promotes equality, fairness, and respect. Advancing women’s rights and strengthening ethical journalism are shared responsibilities that require sustained commitment.”

Gayathry Venkiteswaran, MMM Board Member, said:

“The Malaysian Media Council is pleased to work with SUHAKAM on this very important initiative to strengthen gender equality and sensitivity in news coverage, as we recognise that ethical, fair, and inclusive reporting is essential to public trust and democratic discourse. Gender-sensitive reporting helps the public better understand the realities and contributions of all members of society, leading to more accurate journalism and more informed public debate. We at the Malaysian Media Council commit to advancing newsroom standards that both safeguard press freedom and protect women journalists from discrimination, harassment, and threats that undermine their ability to report freely and safely.”

Together, both SUHAKAM and MMM reaffirm that a gender-responsive, rights-aligned and accountable media ecosystem is fundamental to ensuring that all individuals, regardless of gender, can participate in public life with dignity, equality and safety.

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Issued jointly by:

Suruhanjaya Hak Asasi Manusia Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
Malaysian Media Council (MMM)