



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

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**CHILD SAFEGUARDING CONFERENCE SABAH 2026:
BUILDING COMMUNITIES THAT PROTECT**

KUALA LUMPUR (8 JULY 2026) - On 4th July 2026, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM), Child Safeguarding Initiative (CSI), and Majlis Perkhidmatan Masyarakat Sabah (MPMS) have successfully organised the Child Safeguarding Conference Sabah 2026, bringing together government agencies, civil society organisations, educational institutions, healthcare professionals, law enforcement agencies, child protection practitioners, and strategic partners to strengthen collective efforts in protecting children's rights and safety.

Held under the theme "*Building Communities That Protect*", the Conference reaffirmed that safeguarding children is a shared responsibility that requires coordinated action from families, schools, communities, civil society, the private sector, and government. The Conference served as an important platform to strengthen collaboration, share good practices, and explore practical solutions to address the evolving challenges affecting children in Sabah.

In her opening address, Yang Berhormat Datuk Rina Jainal, Assistant Minister of Women, Community Welfare, and People's Well-being Sabah, reaffirmed the Sabah State Government's commitment to strengthening child protection systems through cross-sector collaboration, early intervention, and greater community awareness. She stressed that safeguarding efforts must be strengthened at every level of society to ensure that every child grows up in a safe and supportive environment.

The Conference commenced with keynote addresses by Mr. Sam Gipson, Chair of the Association of International Malaysian Schools and Principal of Kinabalu International School (KIS), and Puan Elsie Primus, Registrar of the Subordinate Courts of Sabah and Sarawak. Both speakers underscored the importance of early intervention, prevention, and collective responsibility, emphasising that safeguarding children begins within families and communities before cases reach the justice system.

The Conference featured three dialogue sessions that examined critical issues relating to child safeguarding:

i. What the Law Says and What It Means for Us in Protecting Children

The session examined Malaysia's legal and policy framework on child protection while identifying gaps in implementation and enforcement. Discussions also addressed emerging and persistent issues affecting children, including online safety, as well as the protection of undocumented, stateless, and indigenous children, highlighting the need for stronger coordination and rights-based implementation.

ii. Protecting Children Starts with Action: Understanding Sabah's Reporting System

The session provided participants with practical insights into Sabah's child protection and reporting mechanisms. Representatives from the Royal Malaysia Police (D11), the Hospital SCAN (Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect) Team, and the Department of Social Welfare (JKM) shared their respective roles, inter-agency coordination, and procedures for reporting, investigating, and responding to child protection cases.

iii. Beyond Policy: How Can We Better Advocate for Children's Rights

The discussion explored how effective advocacy can influence policy reform and strengthen child protection systems. Panellists highlighted the importance of collective action among government agencies, civil society organisations, communities, and children themselves, while sharing best practices to strengthen advocacy, partnerships, and the promotion of children's rights.



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Throughout the Conference, participants reaffirmed that effective child safeguarding requires a whole-of-society approach that combines strong legal and policy frameworks, coordinated reporting and response mechanisms, meaningful participation of children, and sustained collaborations. The Conference also recognised the establishment of the Anti-Bullying Tribunal as an important milestone in strengthening accountability and protection mechanisms for children and young people.

In her closing address, Datuk Mariati Robert, Vice Chairman of SUHAKAM emphasised that safeguarding children goes beyond policy and legal compliance; it reflects the values of society in ensuring every child is safe, respected, and able to realise their full potential. She underscored that strong laws, effective institutions, and active community participation must work together in a coordinated and child-centred manner.

Datuk Mariati further highlighted that children must be recognised not only as beneficiaries of protection but also as active participants in decisions affecting their lives. She called on all stakeholders to amplify children's voices and ensure that their views are meaningfully considered in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Looking ahead, SUHAKAM reiterates its commitment to working closely with the Government of Malaysia, the Sabah State Government, civil society organisations, and all relevant stakeholders in advancing the objectives of the National Child Policy and the National Child Action Plan (2026-2030). SUHAKAM also calls for continued collaboration to ensure that safeguarding efforts remain inclusive, particularly for children with disabilities, stateless and undocumented children, and indigenous children, so that no child is left behind. The success of the Conference will ultimately be measured not by the discussions held, but by the concrete actions taken to strengthen child safeguarding systems and improve the safety, dignity, and well-being of every child.

SUHAKAM extends its sincere appreciation to the CSI, MPMS, speakers, panellists, moderators, volunteers, partner organisations, and all participants for their invaluable contributions towards the success of the Conference.

Together, we remain committed to building communities that protect every child.

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**Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
8 July 2026**