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GenderEquality

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CEDAW HANDBOOK LAUNCHED TO STRENGTHEN PARLIAMENTARY ACTION ON GENDER EQUALITY

KUALA LUMPUR, 29 SEPTEMBER 2026 — The *CEDAW Handbook: Legislating Equality for Parliamentarians* was launched today at *Legislating Equality: CEDAW & Beyond*, a two-day symposium on the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), held at the Malaysian Bar Council.

The symposium, held from 28 to 29 September, was organised by the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia – Gender Equality (APPGM-GE), the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) and the Bar Council Women’s Rights Committee (WRC), with support from the Australian High Commission and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Malaysia acceded to the CEDAW in 1995, and as a signatory, the state is reviewed by a UN CEDAW Committee every four years through a submission and presentation of a periodic report. This is followed by the Committee’s Concluding Observations, an assessment of progress made and recommendations to improve the status of gender equality, protection, safety and discrimination against women in all forms.

In 2024, the Committee published its Concluding Observations (COs) on Malaysia’s sixth periodic report, highlighting a number of recommendations for the Government’s attention. Among the key areas highlighted at the Symposium were: (1) the slow progress in enacting legislation to prohibit discrimination against women; (2) the continued prevalence of child marriage; (3) the continued practice of female genital cutting (FGC); (4) Uphold principles of non-refoulement, human rights and international protection of refugee women and girls; and (5) the need for Malaysia to review its remaining reservations to Articles 9 and 16 of CEDAW, particularly in relation to nationality and equality in marriage and family relations.

The *CEDAW Handbook* was launched as a practical resource to support parliamentarians in understanding and advancing Malaysia’s commitments under the convention. It provides a framework for legislators to consider gender equality and women’s rights in law-making, parliamentary scrutiny and policy development, and to translate Malaysia’s international commitments into concrete legislative action.

Over the two-day Symposium, 14 panel sessions examined the gaps between legislative processes and the lived realities of women, as well as Malaysia’s progress in implementing the CEDAW Committee’s Concluding Observations. Panelists included former parliamentarians, legal experts, members of the CEDAW Committee and representatives from two National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), SUHAKAM and Komnas Perempuan Indonesia.



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Discussions highlighted the importance of government, NHRIs and civil society working together to strengthen the institutionalisation of CEDAW, including through sustained engagement with Parliamentary Special Select Committees. Speakers also called on parliamentarians to strengthen scrutiny of the Government's progress in implementing the Concluding Observations and to ensure that adequate resources are allocated towards addressing systemic barriers faced by women and girls. This includes ensuring sufficient allocations in Budget 2027 for systematic and disaggregated data collection on discrimination against women, improving access-to-justice standard operating procedures (SOPs), and introducing temporary special measures to accelerate substantive equality.

Speaking at the Symposium, YB Senator Dr Jufitri Joha, Treasurer of APPGM-GE, emphasised that "gender equality cannot remain an aspiration expressed only in declarations."

In his closing remarks, he committed to concrete action within parliament:

*"The value of this gathering will be measured not only by what we have learned, but by what we do next. Let us carry these insights into our committees, constituencies, parties and ministries. **This requires us to strengthen cooperation across political lines and with civil society. We must support reforms that prevent harm, improve remedies and remove the structural barriers that hold women, girls and all vulnerable and marginalised groups back.** Above all, we must establish clear responsibilities and track progress, because accountability is what turns commitment into change."*

END

Jointly issued by:

All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia (APPGM) - Gender Equality
Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)

The symposium is a platform for international and local speakers to share knowledge and examine key women's rights issues in Malaysia, taking into account the current legal landscape, emerging challenges and local realities. It reviews Malaysian laws in the light of Malaysia's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ("CEDAW") and the CEDAW Committee's concluding observations.

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