ORAL STATEMENT ON WOMEN’S RIGHTS FOR THE ANNUAL FULL-DAY DISCUSSION ON WOMEN’S RIGHTS, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE 26TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
26th REGULAR SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA, JUNE 2014

Mr. President,

The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) commends the United Nations Human Rights Council for its perseverance in addressing women’s rights. Women make up over half of the world’s population and possess invaluable capabilities to contribute to society and development. As such, SUHAKAM strongly believes that the MDG’s target to ensure gender equality and empowerment of women should be continued in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. At this juncture, SUHAKAM would like to share some information on the state of women in Malaysia.

In Malaysia, the role of women in society is being continuously highlighted in the Country’s long-term development plans and has seen positive developments. For example, the quota to have at least 30% of women in decision making positions was recently extended to the private sector. In addition, Malaysia’s Domestic Violence Act 1994 was recently amended to include psychological and emotional injuries. It is also now an offence for a husband to coerce his wife into having sexual intercourse by the use of or threat of violence or death.

On the other hand, while noting these improvements, there remain several issues of concern. SUHAKAM calls upon the Malaysian Government to enact a more comprehensive law on sexual harassment; the current statutory provisions on this issue are limited to work places, and places the determination of whether sexual harassment has occurred on the employer rather than the employee-complainant.

Discrimination also exists in so far as citizenship status of the children and foreign spouses of Malaysian women is concerned. Under the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, the child of a Malaysian woman and a foreign spouse is not automatically eligible for a Malaysian citizenship, unlike the child of a Malaysian man and a foreign spouse.

In light of the Government of Malaysia’s rejection of recommendations that called for the withdrawal of its remaining reservations to the CEDAW during the recent adoption of
Malaysia’s second Universal Periodic Review, SUHAKAM strongly urges the Government to reconsider its stance, and to take the lead in paving the way forward for women’s rights.

Thank you Mr President.