



PRESS RELEASE

UNDP & Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development call for a “barrier-free” Malaysia for Persons with Disability (PWDs)

Conference to provide a platform for policymakers, urban planners, architects and civil society groups to discuss better access for all.

Kuala Lumpur, 1 March 2010 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD) today urged all stakeholders to ensure that all public transportation and infrastructure systems are accessible to persons with disability (PWDs), so that they may significantly increase their participation in different social and economic activities and improve their quality of life.

“The upgrading of urban public transportation, which includes improving Accessibility and Connectivity to ensure the rakyat’s access to good public transport, is one of the six National Key Result Areas (NKRA) in The Government Transformation Program. Hence we are pleased to bring together relevant stakeholders to discuss how accessibility standards for planning of public transport, public facilities and infrastructure can be improved,” said YB Datin Paduka Chew Mei Fun, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, while launching the UNDP-MWFCD conference.

Speaking for the UNDP was Mr. Kamal Malhotra, Resident Representative for Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam, who said, “People with disability continue to be one of the most vulnerable and marginalized communities in all societies. Enabling people with disability to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life is thus, not only of critical importance, but also a question of ensuring basic human rights. This will not be possible if the issue of accessibility is not fully addressed.”

Mr. Malhotra also said that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), which Malaysia has signed but has yet to ratify, requires countries to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers to access and ensure that people with disability can readily and conveniently access transportation, public facilities and services, and information and communication technologies. He acknowledged Malaysia's efforts to ensure such rights in its Persons with Disabilities Act 2008, as well as its other policies and guidelines.

About the conference

The *"UNDP-MWFCD National Conference on Accessibility and Universal Design: Implications for Public Transport and the Built Environment"* (1-2 March 2010) is being organised with the objective of mainstreaming the needs of people with disability into all aspects of policy making, using Universal Design to create an enabling environment in terms of public transportation and infrastructure.

Attended by policymakers, local government representatives, urban planners, architects and civil society groups, the event features local and international experts who shared local insights and international best practises in improving the design and accessibility of public transportation and infrastructure which would ease access not only for people with disability, but also other segments of society such as the elderly, pregnant women, and parents with young children.

Also discussed will be how public transport systems, including pedestrian infrastructure, continue to be a major barrier preventing people with disability from actively participating in social and economic activities.

The event also features an eye-opening photo exhibition by UNDP entitled *"Managing Accessibility"* which highlighted the importance of not only properly constructing but also maintaining accessible facilities. Photos from around Malaysia demonstrated how pedestrian infrastructures such as walkways are relatively accessible but are often abused by motorcyclists, but also obstructed by illegal structures, parking and trading. The exhibition was launched by YB Datin Paduka Chew Mei Fun.

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ABOUT UNDP: *UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners.*

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