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## **UNDP REPORT: 'CLIMATE-PROOF' COUNTRY TO PREVENT HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REVERSALS**

**KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 29:** The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) 2007/2008 Human Development Report (HDR) reveals that Malaysia recorded slight improvements in poverty reduction, health and education attainment but warns that climate change could reverse progress in these areas unless Malaysia adapts to its effects.

Launched today by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, YB Dato' Sri Mohd. Effendi Norwawi, the 2007/2008 HDR, entitled '*Fighting Climate Change – Human Solidarity in a Divided World*', indicates that Malaysia's score on the Human Development Index (HDI), calculated based on income, life expectancy, adult literacy and school enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, improved to 0.811 in 2007, from 0.805 in 2006, putting the nation's position in the 'High Human Development' category for a second time.

However, the report points out the need to 'climate-proof' the country by 2017 to protect lower income earners, who will be the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, as well as safeguard key economic sectors to prevent human development reversals.

Among the possible threats to human development identified in the HDR include:

- *The breakdown of agricultural systems as a result of increased exposure to drought, rising temperatures and more erratic rainfall. As a whole, Malaysia's agricultural sector contributes to 7.7 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).*
- *Displacement through flooding and tropical storm activity of up to 332 million people in coastal and low-lying areas. Malaysia has approximately 4,800km of coastline, where 70 per cent of the population (27 million) live within 5km of it.*
- *Change of rainfall patterns and glacial retreat could trigger water scarcity as water catchment areas comes under strain, and affect access to clean water. Within 25 years, half of the world's population could have problem finding enough freshwater for drinking and irrigation*
- *Emerging health risks such as Malaria and dengue. In 2007, Malaysia noted an increase in the number of dengue cases compared to last year, where the number of cases crossed the 1000 mark for the second time in July, signaling an epidemic.*

The 2007/2008 HDR highlights that as a result of past emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gases (GHGs), the world is already committed to further warming for the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and that countries have no choice but to adapt to climate change.

As global temperatures rise, climate shocks such as droughts, floods and storms are forecasted to become more frequent as well as intense. In the short run, climate disasters have been shown to push up food prices, wipe out crops, reduce job opportunities, and destroy assets. In the long

term, the report cautions that climate change will result in loss opportunities for education, reduced productivity and diminished human capabilities.

The 2007/2008 HDR also highlights that although developing countries are not responsible for effects in climate change, they are bearing the brunt of its effects.

Some 262 million people were affected by climate disasters annually from 2000 to 2004, over 98 percent of them in the developing world. In the OECD countries one in 1, 500 people was affected by climate disaster. The comparable figure for developing countries is one in 19 – a risk differential of 79.

To help countries adapt to increased climate risks, UNDP is calling for increased international cooperation and financing to developing countries. The report identifies four key elements that should form the basis for national adaptation strategies: institutions for disaster management; access to information for effective planning; infrastructure for climate-proofing; and insurance for social risk management and poverty reduction.

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