BRIEF

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5TH MALAYSIA SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

DRIVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TRANSFORMATIVE PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

15 September 2026, The Majestic Hotel Kuala Lumpur



The 5th Malaysia Sustainability Leadership Summit 2026 focused on advancing the SDGs through stronger partnerships between government, businesses, civil society, academia and local communities. It highlighted people-centred sustainability, women's economic participation, inclusion and support for vulnerable communities. Corporate leaders also emphasized integrating ESG into business practices and using technology responsibly. The summit further recognized grassroots initiatives and the third sector in empowering communities and creating sustainable livelihoods. Overall, it called for practical action, measurable outcomes and continued commitment to inclusive and sustainable development beyond 2030.

Welcome Speech

Tan Sri Micheal Yeoh, President KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific, UN ESCAP Sustainable Business Network

Strengthening Sustainability Through ESG, SDGs and Public-Private Partnerships: Tan Sri Michael Yeoh welcomed participants to the 5th Malaysia Sustainability Leadership Summit and emphasized the growing importance of sustainability and the shift from traditional CSR programmes towards ESG and SDG commitments. He highlighted how the SDGs contribute to social, environmental and economic justice, while stressing the need for stronger public-private-people partnerships to address challenges such as poverty, climate change and inequality. He also emphasized the importance of private-sector investment, sustainable financing, technology and innovation, particularly artificial intelligence, in supporting Malaysia's sustainability efforts. He concluded by congratulating the award recipients and expressing appreciation to the organizers, speakers, government representatives, businesses and community leaders for their continued contributions towards sustainable development.

Prof. Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria, Head of the Secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Sustainable Development Goals (APPGM-SDG), Chair, Society for the Promotion of SDGs, Malaysia

Strengthening Collaboration and Localising the SDGs Through Community Action: Prof. Datuk Dr. Denison Jayasooria welcomed participants to the 5th Malaysia Sustainability Leadership Summit and emphasized the importance of collaboration in advancing the SDGs, particularly during the final years leading to 2030. He highlighted the need to move beyond simply identifying problems towards developing practical solutions for issues such as poverty, flooding, pollution and community development. He stressed that achieving sustainability requires stronger partnerships between government, the private sector, civil society, academia and local communities, as well as greater consensus across political and social groups. He also highlighted the importance of recognizing grassroots leaders and community organizations that contribute directly to localizing the SDGs, noting their valuable role in addressing community needs and creating sustainable solutions on the ground.

Special Address:

Mr. Nikolas Myint, UN Resident Coordinator for Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam

Accelerating SDG Progress Through Partnership: Mr. Nicholas emphasized that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals requires the active participation of governments, businesses, civil society and local communities rather than relying on government action alone. He noted that although Malaysia has made progress towards the SDGs, significant gaps remain, particularly in the areas of social and environmental sustainability. These challenges are interconnected with economic structures and policy choices, meaning that they require different perspectives, expertise and experiences to address effectively. He therefore stressed the importance of partnerships in moving from individual pilot projects towards solutions that can be implemented on a wider scale.

Promoting Sustainable and Inclusive Growth: Mr. Nicholas highlighted the need for a new approach to economic growth that balances development with environmental and social sustainability. He acknowledged the significant improvements in income and human development achieved in Malaysia and the wider region, while noting that past growth has also created environmental costs. He emphasized that future growth should create jobs, improve incomes and productivity while protecting communities, strengthening resilience and preserving the environment for future generations. He also highlighted the potential for sustainability to create new markets, industries, technologies and employment opportunities, while encouraging stronger cooperation between the public and private sectors to develop financially viable and socially beneficial solutions.

Building Commitment and Courage Beyond 2030: In concluding his address, Mr. Nicholas stressed that partnerships alone are not enough to achieve the SDGs, particularly as 2030 approaches. He called for greater courage in policymaking, business and partnerships, including the willingness to change policies, support sustainable investment, listen meaningfully to communities and adapt when existing approaches do not work. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that vulnerable groups are not left behind and that sustainability becomes part of long-term national development. Ultimately, he noted that the coming years should focus not only on fulfilling the SDG commitments but also on building the foundations for a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable Malaysia that can provide lasting opportunities and wellbeing for future generations.

Keynote Address:

YB Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri, Minister of Women, Family and Community Development Malaysia

People-Centred Sustainability and Inclusive Development: YB Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri emphasized that sustainability should ultimately focus on improving people's lives, rather than being limited to economic growth, environmental targets, technology or infrastructure. She highlighted the importance of building resilient families, ensuring children are safe and nurtured, enabling women to participate meaningfully in the economy, supporting older persons to age with dignity, empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring vulnerable communities receive the necessary support. She also stressed that the SDGs are interconnected, linking gender equality with poverty reduction, health, education, decent work, reduced inequalities, sustainable communities, strong institutions and partnerships.

Unlocking Women's Economic Potential; The keynote address highlighted women's economic participation as an important component of Malaysia's sustainable development. YB Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri noted that barriers such as domestic responsibilities and caregiving continue to affect women's participation in the labour force, representing a structural gap rather than a lack of ability or talent. She explained that KPWKM is addressing these challenges through policy and institutional reforms, including gender mainstreaming, the National Policy on Women and the establishment of Gender Focal Points and Gender Focal Teams across ministries and agencies. These efforts aim to strengthen women's participation in decision-making and ensure gender considerations are incorporated into policies and development planning.

Strengthening the Care Economy: YB Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri stressed the need to recognise caregiving as an essential part of both social wellbeing and economic productivity. She explained that care responsibilities have traditionally been treated as private family matters and disproportionately placed on women, often without sufficient recognition, training or support. She highlighted the potential of a structured care economy to create quality employment, professionalise caregiving, support women returning to the workforce and create opportunities for businesses and social enterprises. She also outlined the Malaysia Care Strategic Framework and Action Plan 2026–2030, which provides a national roadmap to improve the quality, affordability and accessibility of childcare and eldercare while strengthening caregiver training and recognition.

Public-Private-People Partnerships and Human-Centred Technology: The keynote emphasized that sustainable development cannot be achieved by government alone and requires a Public-Private-People Partnership (4P) approach involving government, businesses, civil society, communities and academia. YB Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri highlighted community initiatives and support services as examples of how collaboration can reach people at the local level, while encouraging businesses to view family-friendly policies, care infrastructure and flexible working arrangements as investments in productivity and talent retention. She also highlighted the role of digitalisation and artificial intelligence in improving social service delivery, while stressing that technology must remain human-centred and protect privacy, dignity, security and public trust.

From Commitments to Measurable Outcomes: In concluding her keynote address, YB Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Shukri called for organisations to move beyond discussion and translate sustainability commitments into concrete action. She encouraged every organisation represented at the Summit to establish at least one cross-sector collaboration with clear deliverables and measurable outcomes for the year ahead. She emphasized that progress should be assessed through meaningful improvements in people's lives, including greater participation of women in the economy, access to affordable care, properly trained and recognised caregivers, and improved security and dignity for older and vulnerable communities. She concluded that sustainable development should ultimately be measured by the people empowered, families strengthened and communities whose lives are improved.

Session One: Public-Private-People Partnerships For The SDGs: The Way Forward :

Speakers: Dr. Khairil Ahmad, Director, MySDG Centre for Social Inclusion, APPGM-SDG, Adjunct Professor of Practice, School of Politics, History and International Relations, University of Nottingham Malaysia; **Dato' Shahira Ahmed Bazari,** Executive Director & Head, Group Sustainability & Advocacy, Managing Director's Office, Khazanah Nasional; **Dr. Hezri Adnan,** Senior Advisor on Sustainable Development for UNDP Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam; **Dr. Shubhabrata Samantaray,** Founder & CEO, ENHEROES Group

Moderator: Ms. Anita Ahmad, Chief Executive Officer, MySDG Foundation

Building Meaningful Cross-Sector Partnerships: The session emphasized that achieving the SDGs requires meaningful collaboration between government, businesses, civil society, communities and other stakeholders, as no single institution can address sustainability challenges alone. Speakers stressed that partnerships should move beyond formal agreements and consultation exercises towards genuine engagement, trust and shared responsibility. Effective collaboration requires stakeholders to understand one another's roles, priorities and perspectives while combining their different strengths to develop practical solutions. Such partnerships can help connect policy, business interests and community needs while ensuring that sustainability efforts produce meaningful and lasting benefits for society.

Creating a Common and Accessible Language: The discussion highlighted the importance of developing a common and accessible language among stakeholders with different backgrounds, objectives and areas of expertise. Government, businesses, civil society, researchers and communities often use different terminology and approaches, which can create barriers to effective cooperation. The speakers stressed that sustainability and SDG concepts should therefore be communicated in ways that are understandable and relevant to different groups. Effective communication also requires translating technical information into accessible language while ensuring that community experiences and local realities are properly understood and incorporated into wider discussions and decision-making processes.

Connecting Grassroots Realities with Policy: The speakers emphasized the importance of connecting grassroots experiences with policymaking so that national policies and programmes respond effectively to actual community needs. Research and issue-mapping activities were highlighted as useful approaches for identifying socioeconomic and environmental challenges at the local level and translating community experiences into evidence. The discussion stressed that policymakers should listen directly to communities rather than relying only on statistics or assumptions, as national development figures may not always reflect people's lived experiences. Stronger connections between communities, policymakers and implementing institutions are therefore essential for more responsive and effective SDG implementation.

Aligning Private-Sector Interests with Sustainability: The session explored the importance of encouraging businesses to move beyond traditional philanthropy, sponsorship and short-term CSR activities towards sustainability approaches connected to their core operations and long-term interests. Speakers noted that businesses are increasingly affected by climate risks,

supply-chain disruptions, technological developments and other sustainability-related challenges. Sustainability should therefore be communicated in terms that are meaningful to businesses, including financial value, risk management, resilience, innovation and long-term performance. Aligning private-sector interests with social and environmental objectives can enable businesses to contribute their capital, expertise, technology and networks more effectively towards achieving the SDGs.

Scaling Innovation Through Technology and Collaboration: The session also highlighted the potential of technology and innovation to strengthen partnerships and scale sustainability solutions. Examples included artificial intelligence, satellite technology, data and ground-level operations to address environmental challenges and improve communication between different stakeholders. However, the speakers emphasized that technology alone cannot deliver sustainable outcomes and must be supported by cooperation between government, businesses, communities, foundations and technical experts. Successful initiatives also require continuous learning, monitoring and evaluation, allowing partnerships to evolve according to changing needs and enabling promising solutions to move beyond small-scale projects towards wider and more sustainable implementation.

Luncheon Introductory Speech:

Datuk Seri Mohd Iqbal Rawther, Chairman, Economic Club of Kuala Lumpur (ECKL), Deputy Chairman, KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific

Bringing Sustainability from Policy to the Ground: Datuk Seri Mohd Iqbal Rawther welcomed participants to the luncheon and emphasized the importance of strengthening partnerships between government, the private sector, civil society and local communities in advancing sustainable development. He highlighted the need to translate national policies and SDG commitments into meaningful outcomes at the grassroots level, noting that national development figures may not always reflect the experiences of communities facing poverty, inequality and limited opportunities. He stressed the importance of ensuring that marginalized communities are not left behind while encouraging greater private-sector involvement in supporting sustainability, economic resilience and competitiveness. He concluded by calling for continued collaboration, stronger community-level action and sustained commitment to the SDGs as Malaysia looks beyond 2030.

Special Luncheon Keynote Address:

Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamed, Advisor to the Society for Promotion of SDGs and Former Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Economy)

Localising the SDGs Through Ground-Level Action: Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamed reflected on his journey in advancing the SDGs and emphasized the importance of translating national policies, plans and development goals into practical outcomes at the grassroots level. He highlighted how communities may not always experience the benefits reflected in national economic indicators, making localisation and direct engagement essential. He noted the importance of communicating SDG concepts in local and accessible language so that communities can understand their relevance and participate meaningfully. This approach ensures that sustainability efforts remain connected to real community needs and support the principle of leaving no one behind.

Building Partnerships Across Government and Society: The keynote address highlighted the importance of bringing together government agencies, companies, universities, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to develop partnerships around shared SDG objectives. Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamed described the growth of collaborative networks that encourage regular dialogue, knowledge-sharing and the development of common projects. He also highlighted the value of cooperation across political and institutional differences, emphasizing the need for maturity, objective discussion, respect, transparency and open dialogue. Such partnerships can strengthen collective efforts to embed sustainability within Malaysia's development agenda and encourage more coordinated action.

Strengthening Inclusion and Looking Beyond 2030: Dato' Sri Mustapa Mohamed stressed that achieving the SDGs requires greater attention to marginalized communities and people who remain outside existing support systems. He called for stronger cooperation between government, the private sector and civil society to ensure that assistance reaches those who need it, particularly in areas such as education, income and health. He encouraged participants to extend their commitment beyond the summit and to bring SDG discussions and initiatives into communities across Malaysia. In concluding, he emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum towards 2030 while beginning conversations on Malaysia's sustainability priorities beyond the SDG timeline.

Session Two: Corporate Leadership For ESG and SDG Impact:

Speakers: Dr. Renard Siew, Group Head Corporate Sustainability, Yinson & President, Malaysia Carbon Market Association (MCMA); **Ms. Sarah Yeoh,** Director of Climate Change and Sustainability Services (CCaSS), Ernst & Young Consulting Sdn Bhd; **Prof. M Nazri Muhd,** Chief AI Architect & Advisor AI & Design-Thinking (AIDT) Lab, KSI Strategic Institute for Asia Pacific; **Mr. Joji Tokunaga,** Member of the FMM Sustainable Development Goals & Climate Change Committee (SDGCC)
Moderator: En. Muzahid Shah, Research Chair, ESG Association of Malaysia (ESGAM)

Embedding ESG into Corporate Decision-Making: The session highlighted the need for companies to move beyond treating ESG as a separate sustainability programme and instead integrate it into everyday corporate decision-making and organizational practices. Speakers emphasized that ESG considerations should be reflected in board discussions, investment committees, procurement processes, risk management and business planning, rather than being addressed only through dedicated sustainability functions. They also stressed that corporate incentives and performance indicators should focus on measurable long-term sustainability outcomes instead of simply completing reporting activities. Embedding ESG across governance structures and organizational culture can therefore help companies make more responsible decisions while strengthening resilience, reducing exposure to sustainability-related risks and creating long-term value.

Moving Beyond Compliance Towards Meaningful Action: The discussion stressed that ESG reporting should not become an exercise focused solely on meeting regulatory requirements, completing sustainability checklists or producing annual reports. Speakers emphasized that companies need to use the information collected through ESG reporting to understand their

environmental and social impacts and take concrete action, particularly in areas such as decarbonization and climate-related risk reduction. Corporate leaders were encouraged to ask how ESG information can support competitiveness, investment decisions, risk management and long-term business performance rather than simply asking whether reporting requirements have been fulfilled. This shift from compliance towards continuous improvement is essential for turning sustainability commitments into practical actions and more meaningful outcomes.

Harnessing AI and Data for Sustainable Impact: The panel also explored the growing role of artificial intelligence, data and digital transformation in strengthening ESG and SDG outcomes across organizations. AI can support areas such as impact measurement, reporting, scenario planning, risk management and the design of social programmes, while allowing non-technical users to develop and apply practical AI solutions. Speakers highlighted the shift from people simply using AI towards becoming creators who can apply AI together with design thinking to address organizational and social challenges. However, technology should remain focused on clearly defined outcomes, with human judgement, responsible governance and organizational objectives guiding how AI and data are applied.

Creating Long-Term Value Through Sustainability Leadership: The session concluded with a strong focus on making sustainability a genuine business priority that contributes to long-term value creation rather than treating ESG as an additional reporting responsibility. Speakers highlighted the importance of connecting sustainability with competitiveness, investment decisions, financial resilience, risk reduction and opportunities for innovation, particularly as environmental and social risks increasingly affect business operations. They also emphasized the need for companies to demonstrate measurable impact and ensure that sustainability initiatives contribute to wider social and environmental outcomes. Strong corporate leadership can therefore help transform ESG and SDG commitments into integrated business practices that support organizational resilience while contributing to broader sustainable development objectives.

Session Three: Social Economy and The Third Sector: Empowering Communities For Inclusive Growth and Wellbeing:

Speakers: Ms. Zoel Ng, Director, MySDG Academy, APPGM-SDG**; Ms. Sridayu Samsuri,** Chairperson, Persatuan Wanita Inspirasi Kuantan (WINK) & Founder, Teja Station**; Mr. Mohammad Shazie Zaini Mohd Shahril Firdaus,** Chairman, Koperasi Matlamat Pembangunan Lestari Berhad**; Ms. Norazlini Mohd Ali, C**hairperson, Koperasi Pelancongan Hanya D' Pasoh Berhad and Solution Partner, APPGM-SDG (ATOA Enterprise)
Moderator: Mr. James Ryan Raj, Deputy Executive Director, APPGM-SDG

Strengthening the Role of the Third Sector: The session highlighted the important role of the third sector, including civil society organizations, social enterprises, cooperatives, community groups and foundations, in promoting inclusive and sustainable development. While the government and businesses have important responsibilities, they cannot address every social, economic and environmental challenge on their own. Third-sector organizations are often closely connected to communities and understand local realities, allowing them to develop

practical solutions related to income generation, employment, skills development, sustainable tourism and community wellbeing. Their focus on creating social value demonstrates how economic activities can contribute to stronger and more inclusive communities.

Empowering Communities Through Local Initiatives: A key discussion focused on how grassroots initiatives can empower communities by building confidence, skills, networks and opportunities for local participation. Speakers shared examples of community-based activities that began on a small scale but expanded through training, partnerships, funding and continued community involvement, particularly among women and rural communities. These initiatives demonstrate that meaningful social impact can emerge from relatively small investments when communities are given the opportunity and support to develop their own solutions. The session emphasized that community empowerment is not simply about providing assistance, but about enabling people to become active participants in creating sustainable livelihoods and improving their own wellbeing.

Building Capacity, Partnerships and Market Access: The panel emphasized that third-sector organizations require stronger capacity building, partnerships and access to markets in order to expand their social impact and become more sustainable. Training, networking and ecosystem development were highlighted as important tools for helping community organizations understand emerging opportunities, improve their skills and connect with government, businesses, universities and other partners. Speakers also discussed the importance of improving the visibility and marketing of community-based products by using storytelling, social media and technology to communicate both the products and the people behind them. Stronger connections between community enterprises and wider markets can therefore create opportunities for growth while maintaining their social and community-focused purpose.

Creating an Enabling Ecosystem for Inclusive Growth: The session concluded by emphasizing the need for a supportive ecosystem that connects communities with government agencies, private-sector partners, academic institutions and other stakeholders. Education and awareness were identified as important starting points, followed by skills development, networking and access to platforms that can strengthen the capabilities of third-sector organizations. Speakers also stressed the importance of the government engaging directly with communities to understand their specific needs and developing policies that reflect ground-level realities. Through sustained collaboration, appropriate financing, capacity building and stronger community participation, the third sector can contribute more effectively to inclusive economic growth, social wellbeing and the broader achievement of the SDGs.

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