**MALAYSIA: COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT GENERAL COMMENT REGARDING CHILDREN’S RIGHTS IN RELATION TO THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT**

Malaysians have joined other digital citizens in incorporating the online lifestyle as the country strives towards becoming a developed nation by 2020. The Malaysian government is in full support of children’s access to digital environment and their ability to express their views and opinions, in line with rights provided under the laws and regulations of Malaysia. With this comes the rising need to safeguard children from any harm that may be encountered in the digital environment. It is therefore necessary to ensure that children are guided to be responsible online users to enable them to enjoy positive, safe and secure online experience.

Recognising this, Malaysia has introduced the **Plan of Action on Child Online Protection 2015-2020**. This plan emphasizes 4 key aspects of advocacy, prevention, intervention and support services. The action plan, which includes programs and coordinated actions has been implemented by all parties, particularly government agencies to protect children online. This action plan also acts as a catalyst in raising awareness and commitment of every member of the community, especially industry players, parents, caregivers, teachers, communities and NGOs.

Considering the action plan is expiring this year, Malaysia intends to incorporate aspects of children’s rights in the digital environment into the comprehensive National Policy on Children and accompanying Action Plan that is currently being developed. This General Comment is indeed timely in providing some directions on mechanisms needed to ensure that children’s rights in the digital environment are protected.

Malaysia has continuously enhanced efforts to keep children safe from online abuse and threats. Regulating access to harmful content on the internet and the protection of children online is a shared role between service providers, parents and guardians. Currently, on the regulatory side, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) in collaboration with Internet Service Providers has implemented a **"Parental Control Tools" initiative** to give Internet users, especially parents; the ability to monitor and filter content accessed by their families and children and to prevent the spread of harmful content.

At the same time, in accordance with Malaysia’s obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child’s right to obtain information and participate online is also respected. This can be seen in initiatives undertaken to promote digital literacy for children which is carried out while ensuring a safe and enabling Internet environment for them.

From a proactive standpoint, advocacy and awareness programmes as well as co-regulation initiatives with enforcement agencies and platform providers are used by MCMC for the protection of children online. MCMC has been running the **"Click Wisely" (*Klik Dengan Bijak*) programme** since 2012 to cultivate a culture of using the Internet positively and responsibly. The “Click Wisely” programme focuses on three key aspects; namely Security, Vigilance and Responsibility and emphasizes self-regulation to protect oneself from negative or harmful content. It is an inclusive programme, which involves multiple stakeholders in the country such as parents, guardians, educators, non-governmental organizations, Ministries and Government agencies, as well as international organisations (e.g. UNICEF) and service providers such as Google and Facebook. These initiatives include advocacy programmes and the development of training and education modules for parents, guardians and educators.

Apart from that, the Government of Malaysia in partnership with international organizations (INTERPOL, UNICEF and ECPAT International) is conducting **a study “Disrupting Harm: Evidence to Understand Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse”** to address child online protection. This study which is being conducted from August 2019 and expected to be completed by 2021 is envisaged to understand the various dimensions of online child abuse, further develop action plans and strategies to protect children and adolescents more effectively, while bringing offenders to justice.