



## Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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### Press Statement

22 October 2021

#### **CAP calls on Malaysian Government to enshrine the Right to a Clean and Sustainable Environment in our Constitution**

When the world is facing an existential crisis – with the masses facing poor access to clean air, clean water, and a safe and clean place to live; and in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate change crisis – the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) lauds the UN Human Rights Panel for recognising the right to a clean and sustainable environment as a basic human right.

This human right is key for environmental justice and the protection of the environment against unsustainable economic development which pollutes and destroys the livelihoods and habitat of especially the poor communities, who do not have the means to counter the influence and power of the state, rich developers, industrialists or corporations.

The United Nations' top human rights body voted to adopt the resolution with 43 votes in favour while China, India, Japan and Russia abstained from voting. The United States is not a member of the UN Human Rights Council and did not participate in the vote.

CAP is outraged by the fact that the big and powerful countries abstained from voting and the US (though not being a member of the Human Rights Council during the Trump administration in 2018) has opposed the measure.

It was a push from the smaller nations for the UN Human Rights Council to recognise the right to a safe and clean environment, as they will suffer the most, though they were not the main contributors to the global environmental crisis.

This is a key recognition for peoples of the world in the struggle for environmental justice, a clean and safe place to call home, and a right to safe and clean life-giving resources like air and water. It will give people a stronger voice against unsustainable development projects by both the public authorities and private entities.

CAP calls on the Malaysian Government to enshrine this basic human right to a clean and sustainable environment in the constitution.

More than 100 constitutions across the world have adopted a human right to a healthy environment. No other social or economic right has spread as quickly through the world's constitutions.

Portugal (1976) and Spain (1978) were the first countries to recognise the right to live in a healthy environment. And in 2008, Ecuador became the first nation in the world to provide explicit constitutional recognition of rights of nature, followed by Bolivia in 2009.

Malaysians have suffered long enough from incessant water supply cuts due to water pollution (with millions affected in the Klang Valley, and thousands sickened and schools closed in the Kim Kim river pollution), the transboundary haze, many industrial pollution and accident cases, destruction of forests, and the destruction of livelihoods and displacement by huge development projects.

It is time Malaysia enshrined the right to a clean and sustainable environment in the Constitution to help Malaysians protect and assert their rights to a safe and healthy habitat to call home.

**Mohideen Abdul Kader**

**President**

**Consumers Association of Penang (CAP)**