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MALAYSIAN SELECTED FOR UN-UAE SDG ART PROJECT

DUBAI, 25 NOVEMBER 2021 – Like many people, **Saadiah Sulaiman** had no idea what the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was nor what the fuss and buzz around the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was about.

But the 52-year-old from Sarawak who has been living in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) since 2007 is now an expert in her own right, at least on what constitutes Decent Work and Economic Growth – the 8th goal.

This is thanks to the *SDGs Through Art* project, a collaborative initiative of the United Nations (UN) and the UAE which was kicked-off in 2020 to enhance awareness on the ambitious targets adopted by over 190 member states at the 70th session of the UN General Assembly.

Supported by Dubai-based ZeeArts Gallery, Saadiah was among 17 UAE-based artists from various nationalities who were selected for the socially-engaged artistic project to commemorate UN's 75th anniversary last year. Each artist was commissioned to explore and research on the assigned goal and develop specific artistic expressions that would help in engaging the public around the respective SDGs and mobilise them to support the implementation.

“Frankly yet quite unfortunately, SDGs is not a day-to-day topic typically discussed over coffee or casual conversations. The only difference for me was that once I agreed to be part of this special project, I felt a rush sense of duty of care for me as an artist to spread awareness through my art and act on the SDGs in particular SDG No 8 - Decent Work & Economic growth.

“The more I researched and discussed with others, the clearer the goals become. The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was meant for us, desperately calling for collective actions to work together and commit to all the goals for the benefit of everyone, leaving no one behind,” said the mother of three children.

The artworks were finally unveiled at the UN Hub at Expo 2020 Dubai under the title “Painting a Better World” for a week-long exhibition from 9 to 13 November, after a one-year postponement due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The focal point of my creation is the self-winding watch which continues to function as long as all components work. Metaphorically, this infinite mechanism represents sustainability in the way that socio-economic and environmental inter-dependencies are wisely maintained.



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“The SDG goal on “Decent Work” is represented by the wheels and gears that portray the endless opportunities created for everyone within the society, regardless of race, gender, age and disabilities. The tints of gold, bronze and silver symbolise fair value of rewards and security of human capital. When Decent Work is achieved, Economic Growth will naturally follow across the globe, represented by the watch's dials. And the varying sizes of circles depict the growing economies, “explained Saadiah on the concept of her artwork.

She based her illustration on the mechanics of a watch because like time, sustainability is crucial to the human race, adding that a sustainable way of living, must become as available to all as it is to wear time on our wrist.

“However, it will take the cohesiveness and togetherness of everyone on this planet working towards these SDGs to achieve human survival in the modernised and heavily industrialised world,” said Saadiah.

Besides Saadiah, other artists who had contributed their creative efforts to the project hailed from developed and developing countries namely, the Netherlands, Sweden, India, Cape Verde, Syria, Iraq, Armenia, Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, South Africa, Iran, Mauritius, Argentina and UAE.

Saadiah, a quantity surveyor-turned-artist, has also recently signed up as a volunteer with the Malaysia Pavilion, confessing that she instantly felt at home when visiting the pavilion and jumped on the opportunity to contribute towards the success of the country's participation at Expo.

“As an EXPO 2020 Dubai volunteer since 2017, my first assigned task was to be part of the Opening Ceremony cast. So, I had to postpone my intention to volunteer at the Malaysia Pavilion.

“The sustainability trademarks are carefully incorporated in every aspect of our Rainforest Canopy Pavilion. This made me feel so proud. To be a volunteer at the Malaysia Pavilion would be to me, an icing on top of the cake,” gushed Saadiah.

Deputy Commissioner-General for UN at Expo 2020 Dr Dena Assaf said the artworks will be placed on a roadshow to all the seven emirates to promote the SDGs.

The UN Hub is located in the Opportunity Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, the thematic pavilion that examines how to unlock the potential of individuals and communities in creating positive change for people and planet with a focus on the SDGs. The UN has planned a series of events and activities that reflect the values of multilateralism and showcase the role of international cooperation and joint actions to overcome global challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change and achieving the SDGs.

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ABOUT MALAYSIA PAVILION AT EXPO 2020 DUBAI

Malaysia will be among 192 countries participating in Expo 2020 Dubai, scheduled for 1 Oct. 2021 to 31 March 2022. Themed “Connecting Minds, Creating the Future”, the world expo is the first to be held in the Middle East, Africa & South Asia region.

Malaysia’s pavilion is self-built and depicts a Rainforest Canopy. It carries the theme “Energising Sustainability” to capture the nation’s commitment and approaches to sustainable development. It is a net zero carbon pavilion.

Malaysia’s activities during the expo will include permanent displays, showcases, pocket talks, summits and forums, cultural performances, demonstrations and 26 weekly thematic trade and business programmes. The business weeks will be helmed and supported by 21 ministries, 70 agencies and 5 state governments.

The Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation is the lead ministry for Malaysia’s participation at the mega event. Malaysian Green Technology and Climate Change Corporation (MGTC) is the implementing agency.

ABOUT THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION

The Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation (MOSTI) is a ministry of the Government of Malaysia. In 2018, the entire component of the MOSTI, Green Technology and Energy Components from the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water (KeTTHA) and related components of Climate Change and Environment from the Ministry of Natural resources and Environment (NRE) has been restructured and formed the Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment & Climate Change (MESTECC).

Since 2020, MESTECC has been restructured and its name has been changed to MOSTI again. Dato’ Sri Dr Adham Baba has been appointed as Minister of Science, Technology, and Innovation since 27 August 2021.

ABOUT MALAYSIAN GREEN TECHNOLOGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE CORPORATION

Malaysian Green Technology and Climate Change Corporation (MGTC) is an agency under the Ministry of Environment and Water whose scope involves green growth, climate change and sustainable lifestyle.

Three national policies – the National Green Technology Policy (NGTP), the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) and the Green Technology Master Plan (GTMP) – outline MGTC’s role as a catalyst for green economic growth.

Its three core roles are:

- Mainstreaming the Green Economy through green product and service expansion programmes such as MyHIJAU Mark Certification Programme, Green Technology Financing Scheme (GTFS) and green technology tax incentives, namely the Green Income Tax Exemption (GITE) and Green Investment Tax Allowance (GITA), besides providing training and human capital development schemes.
- Drive climate change mitigation actions such as advocacy for energy efficiency and renewable energy, low carbon city programmes and low carbon mobility initiatives.
- Cultivate a green lifestyle through publicity and awareness programmes in fostering cooperation between the government and private sectors via global-scale platforms such as the International Greentech and Eco Products Exhibition and Conference Malaysia (IGEM) and other public programmes.

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