



WISMA PUTRA

# *FOCUS IN CONTINUITY*

**A FRAMEWORK FOR  
MALAYSIA'S FOREIGN POLICY  
IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD**





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FOR

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PANDEMIC

WORLD



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PANDEMIC WORLD**

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In addressing the complex reality, I earnestly believe that the Foreign Policy Framework titled *Focus In Continuity: A Framework for Malaysia's Foreign Policy In A Post-Pandemic World* encapsulates the spirit of *Keluarga Malaysia* succinctly - focusing on reviving Malaysia's economic and social woes, against the backdrop of COVID-19.

The Framework outlines the strategic direction and immediate priority areas to support Malaysia's overall recovery. It manifests Malaysia's firm commitment and response in encouraging the concept of inclusiveness that cuts across religion, ethnic and state boundaries which ultimately extends an invitation to the international community to come together as one family, the "World Family". In the same spirit, Malaysia will strive to work closely with other countries in our efforts to recover from the pandemic together.

**YAB Dato' Sri Ismail Sabri Yaakob**  
**Prime Minister of Malaysia**



While maintaining Malaysia's long – standing fundamental foreign policy principles that have guided the nation's diplomatic practice over the years, this Foreign Policy Framework will provide fresh impetus, focus and direction in conducting and navigating Malaysia's foreign policy in a world reeling and recovering in the aftermaths of the COVID-19 pandemic. The key priority areas and emphasis have been carefully chosen to reflect the strengths that Malaysia would leverage on in the conduct of her foreign policy in the foreseeable years to come.



**YB Dato' Saifuddin Abdullah  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of  
Malaysia**



This Foreign Policy Framework elucidates Wisma Putra's commitment in promoting and safeguarding Malaysia's national interests bilaterally, regionally and internationally. This is pertinent as the world grapples to adapt to the economic, political and social threats and challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is my fervent hope that this publication would serve as a useful guide to Wisma Putra and all interested parties.

**YBhg. Tan Sri Muhammad  
Shahrul Ikram Yaakob  
Secretary-General  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of  
Malaysia**

# INTRODUCTION

**Focus in Continuity:** A Framework for Malaysia's Foreign Policy in a Post-Pandemic World is an articulation of Malaysia's foreign policy priorities amid the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This document will serve as a guide for action for Malaysia's foreign policy establishment. Greater cohesion will be achieved as those responsible for individual phases of the policy cycle align their efforts in pursuit of a focused set of objectives.

This document, which was approved by the Cabinet on 3 November 2021, also serves to communicate Wisma Putra's priorities to the Malaysian public and shape its engagement with other domestic stakeholders and agencies, the private sector and civil society organisations (CSO). It is also aimed at communicating Malaysia's priorities to partner nations.

It serves as an extension to the Foreign Policy Framework of the New Malaysia (published in June 2019) and is ancillary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Strategic Plan 2021-2025, the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (2021-2025), and the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030.

This Framework has been prepared via an extensive consultative process (*syura*). It involved the participations of the Cabinet Ministers, senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, parliamentarians, the Consultative Council on Foreign Policy, academia, entrepreneurs and corporate representatives, professionals and members of CSO.

In achieving the objectives outlined in this document, an intermediate aim would be to strengthen and empower Wisma Putra and its agencies, which include the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR), the Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCCT), and the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia. As an autonomous research organisation under Wisma Putra, ISIS Malaysia will complement the Government through Track II activities.



**Malaysia** is a multicultural, modern and progressive country. It is a resilient nation making steady progress towards embodying a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable vision. As laid out in the Twelfth Malaysia Plan, goals of growth and equality are on the list of top priorities for the next half decade. With a unique history and, accordingly, a unique set of considerations and values, Malaysia's national identity is very much informed by not just its strengths of moderation and tolerance, but also its geography and natural environment. As a trading nation that is dependent on maritime routes whose security and economic prosperity are irrevocably tied to the rest of the world, foreign relations represent a critical function of the government. Maintaining stable and fruitful relations with key international partners, particularly those with which Malaysia has common strategic interests, constitutes the primary task of Malaysia's foreign policy establishment.

As a member of the international family of nations, Malaysia proactively and fully participates in multilateral mechanisms. Malaysia is supportive of necessary measures and reforms to address imminent environmental challenges and to ensure a free and fair multilateral trading system. Malaysia believes in upholding and promoting peaceful coexistence and speaking out for the voiceless and the oppressed. Malaysia also commits to a productive role as an international development partner, especially in the enhancement of peace and prosperity. Malaysia's foreign policy reflects these identities.

Foreign policy begins at home. A nation's foreign policy priorities ultimately stem from domestic imperatives. Divergences between foreign and domestic policies are unsustainable. Malaysia believes that the causes and values it promotes must have a domestic basis, that a demand for progress on the international stage must be matched by movement on the home front.

Like many countries, this is an ongoing process for Malaysia. But it is an undertaking that the country and its people are committed to. Malaysia's development history and its reputation for being a progressive voice in the international arena is well recognised by the global community. Thus, Malaysia is confident that its achievements and experiences will contribute tangibly to the international community. Malaysia is willing and happy to share these lessons with the global community for the betterment of all.



**The COVID-19 pandemic** represents the greatest challenge to the world since the end of the Second World War. Few countries have managed to prevent multiple waves of infections within their communities or successfully controlled the spread of the coronavirus without economic and social activities grinding to a near halt. Two years since the emergence of the pandemic, international travel and global supply chains remain encumbered. No country has escaped the profound and disruptive consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on international order and the global economy. With the prospect of the virus being endemic for the foreseeable future, Malaysia, like other countries, will have to learn to not just live with the virus, but to thrive in spite of it.



A return to a pre-COVID-19 world might not be possible. Policymakers must contend with an uncertain new normal marked by disruption and unpredictability. Diplomacy as we know it has been irrevocably affected. The “what, how and why” that shape our engagement with the world will have to change accordingly. Post pandemic, foreign policymaking must become more agile and dynamic, not just in how it reacts to disruptions but in identifying and leveraging on emerging trends.

More than ever, the pandemic has blurred the lines between domestic and foreign policies. Both have always been co-dependent but now they intersect more than ever, and not always neatly. Wisma Putra will need to continue to adjust to these changes and work closely with other ministries, agencies, state governments, businesses and civil society in supporting policies and strategies put in place as Malaysia forges ahead in the post-pandemic era.

**Intensification of major power competition.** The relations among major powers continue to be marked by a mix of cooperation and competition. Nonetheless, the competitive elements of the relationship have sharpened in recent years. Points of contention now encompass trade, technology, data security, intellectual property, and international rules and norms. The global pandemic adds a new dimension – the utilisation of vaccine diplomacy to cultivate influence. Decoupling, once a mostly academic discussion, is now an ongoing process across several critical sectors. Malaysia enjoys excellent relations with these major powers. While Malaysia has reaped the dividends of successfully managing these relationships, a prolonged and increasingly antagonistic rivalry between major powers in trade, technology and critical sea routes will have consequences for Malaysia's strategic, security and economic interests.

**The global climate emergency.** The recent report from the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world's leading authority on climate science, included stark warnings that human activities are changing the earth's climate in unprecedented ways. This will have dire consequences for human and environmental security, requiring immediate new policy measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strategies to adapt to the dangerous impacts of climate change. The ripple effects of a climate emergency will spill over into both traditional and non-traditional security spheres including forced population displacement, more frequent and intense climate-related disasters such as floods and forest fires, increasing fragility of the food-water-energy nexus and public health problems. The transboundary nature of the challenge, and the fact that some of the alarming long-term consequences projected are now irreversible, have infused a renewed sense of urgency. As a result, climate change has emerged as an issue of utmost importance. All Member States, including major powers, should enhance engagements on the need for shared action and responsibility to address climate change. As such, the pursuit of innovative solutions, including enhanced commitment to sustainable, renewable, and clean energy while ensuring a just global environmental governance and architecture should be prioritised to make Malaysia's business and energy landscape more competitive and resilient.

**Partial reversals in globalisation and multilateralism.** The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare much of the longstanding vulnerabilities and inequities in the mechanisms underpinning much of the globalised and multilateral networks. However, the growing propensity of protectionism, nationalism, identity politics, unilateral sanctions, treaty withdrawals and even military and economic coercion, long preceded the global pandemic. Not everyone has benefitted equally from globalisation and multilateralism. This in turn set the stage for reversals in political support for globalisation and multilateralism, including in countries that have previously championed these causes. Multilateralism allows for a more democratic decision-making process at the international level. Malaysia has a stake in ensuring that major decisions that impinge on the interests of all nations are taken in multilateral platforms instead of being imposed by the major powers or exclusive groupings.



**Increased threats to human security.** There is a need for a peaceful and long-lasting solution to be found in response to the spillover effects caused by domestic political instability in the region, which was further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the ongoing humanitarian challenges, recurring displacement internally and beyond national borders can be expected for the foreseeable future. As conditions faced by these displaced individuals deteriorate, their push factors to flee grows. Thus, Malaysia alongside ASEAN Member States have taken steps to engage key parties to this situation to extend assistance where possible. Malaysia, which already hosts a very substantial number of refugees and asylum seekers, remains the preferred destination for most of those fleeing the region.



**Elevated threat of radicalisation and terrorism in an uncertain post-pandemic world.** The impact of the global pandemic on radicalisation and terrorism is varied but the threat is not diminished. Extremists have sought to expose and indoctrinate an increasingly online global population to their narratives via virtual platforms. While countermeasures have largely de-platformed these groups and individuals on larger networks, many are thought to be active on smaller, less secure networks that lack the capacity to self-monitor. Additionally, the medium to long-term socio-economic impact of the pandemic, in particular the entrenchment of already vast inequalities in the global response, will fuel the grievances that feed radicalisation. The long-term deficit of political stability, security and opportunity for livelihoods in parts of the Middle East, South and Central Asia, and even certain localities in Southeast Asia, are likely to remain a simmering factor on the trends of radicalisation and terrorism.

**Reversal of democratic and human rights gains.** Like other regions, the COVID-19 pandemic has had ripple effects on hard-won democratic and human rights norms in Southeast Asia. There are nascent indications that pandemic management measures have been used to entrench positions and stifle dissent. Civic spaces on issues such as freedom of assembly, movement and expression, and the transparency of checks and balances mechanisms have also been adversely impacted.

# CONTINUITY: ENDURING PRINCIPLES

**This Framework** does not seek to alter the fundamental principles of Malaysia's foreign policy. Malaysia's approach towards foreign relations is inextricably tied to its strategic geography as well as its specific political, economic, and social contexts. Malaysia is strategically located at the crossroads of international commerce that attract the attention and interest of the international community, including the major powers. Malaysia, therefore, has a deep stake in ensuring that the global strategic environment remains stable and predictable while promoting a free and fair international economic system. As a multicultural nation, Malaysia places significant importance in dialogue and peaceful coexistence between civilisations and faiths. Its nation-building experience has led Malaysia to place a premium on the promotion of democracy, rule of law and human rights. Altogether, these elements cohere to inform how Malaysia conducts its foreign relations, irrespective of changes of government.

The Strategic Plan 2021-2025 was prepared at the onset of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and could not take into account the full impacts of the pandemic. While much of the initial policy responses were domestically oriented, the emerging new normal of not just a post-pandemic world but a world where the COVID-19 is endemic means that some priorities have to be reassessed and resources reallocated accordingly.

While the broad national interests remain consistent, reprioritisation of specific goals has become essential for Wisma Putra so that it can play its role effectively in facilitating the national agenda. For example, saving lives from the pandemic has become the most critical amongst the national security interests. Thus, foreign policy priorities must be aligned to help achieve this national interest, for example by ensuring enough and timely supply of vaccines. Also, foreign policy can assist in the formulation and implementation of new standard operating procedures (SOPs) concerning border control and international travels. This is relevant in terms of economic interests too. In the security sense, the SOPs on international travels ensure that our people are protected against the entry of more infected people and new variants. In addition, the SOPs also ensure the possibility of safe travel into Malaysia for business, the Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) programme and social visits that will contribute to the Malaysian economy.

These foreign policy goals, stemming from current national priorities, will be pursued through the usual foreign policy frameworks of bilateral, regional and multilateral diplomacy. These pursuits will be guided by Malaysia's long-standing principles of cultivating friendly relations with all countries, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and upholding multilateralism, among others.

In the conduct of its foreign policy, Malaysia will continue to uphold the basic principles outlined above including as follows:

### **Non-alignment**

Non-alignment means that Malaysia will not align and subordinate its foreign policy to those of a major power against another. The conduct of Malaysia's foreign relations shall instead continue to be guided by its values and a clinical evaluation of its national interests. A policy of non-alignment maximises Malaysia's freedom of action and sends an unequivocal signal to competing major powers that Malaysia does not wish to be drawn into and entangled in their rivalries. The imperatives of non-alignment have assumed greater significance given the intensification of major power rivalries.

Non-alignment should not be confused or conflated with a policy of strict neutrality, which obliges countries to restrain itself from taking positions on issues that have become a matter of dispute between other countries. Malaysia will not hesitate to adopt positions, cultivate relationships, and support initiatives that advance its values, beliefs and interests. Malaysia cannot remain neutral on matters that involve fundamental rights such as the Palestinian cause and also as exemplified in our strong opposition against the Apartheid regime. Nor can it afford to be neutral on matters that relate to its core national interests, including its territorial and maritime claims in the South China Sea.

### **International Law and Norms**

Malaysia will continue to support the primacy of international law and norms. The extensive web of rules, norms and standards for the behaviour of international actors benefit both the governments that have adopted them and their citizens. As a country plugged into the global system, Malaysia has a stake in the implementation of these laws and norms. A global system that is not underpinned by international laws and norms will be one where might makes right, where power is the global currency and coercion the norm.

A primary example is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Convention sets out the definitive legal framework on maritime entitlements. This is of paramount importance to Malaysia, a non-contiguous country separated by the South China Sea, in upholding its legitimate maritime claims and interests.

Nevertheless, Malaysia remains cognisant that certain longstanding structures and norms within the international system are sometimes inherently unbalanced from the perspective of less industrialised or smaller nations. Malaysia is committed to working for a more equitable system for all countries. A key part of this includes its support for continued reform process of the United Nations Security Council.

## Human Rights

Human rights have become increasingly pertinent in the discourse of Malaysia's domestic politics. While there remain many challenges in finding consensus on specific issues of human rights in Malaysia, the Government is resolute in making human rights an important agenda in its administration. Malaysia will uphold and promote human rights without compromising the fundamental tenets of the Federal Constitution and this will be reflected in its foreign policy.

Malaysia will advocate human rights more strongly internationally and speak on behalf of groups that suffer from mistreatment, discrimination, suppression and injustices. Malaysia will be vocal in calling for the perpetrators of crimes against humanity, genocide, war crimes and crimes of aggression to be brought to justice. In addition, Malaysia will play an active international role in proposing ideas and opinions that can improve the laws, regulations, structures and systems related to the protection of human rights in the world.



Malaysia believes that human rights have an important role to play in promoting nation-building, ensuring security as well as prosperity. The nation will continue to strongly advocate for open dialogue and constructive conversation on issues of interests such as the Palestinian cause and the situation in Myanmar in defending the rights of the oppressed. The nation will continue taking a whole-of-society approach in promoting human rights domestically, regionally and globally to achieve a more peaceful, more inclusive, and more prosperous society. This goal is in line with Malaysia's consistent advocacy for inclusivity, which includes gender equality and youth empowerment initiatives.

Malaysia has made many international human rights commitments such as ratification of three core human rights conventions: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPRD).

Malaysia has also supported human rights declarations such as the Durban Declaration and Programmes of Action (2001) and all the related resources and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People 2007. Malaysia voted in support of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution in 2015 to strengthen the provision in the protection of human rights defenders.

Malaysia underwent the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2009, 2013 and 2018. Malaysia has sought to be active in fulfilling these obligations. Malaysia has received special rapporteurs such as the Special Rapporteur on cultural rights in 2017; the Special Rapporteur on drinking water and sanitation in 2018 and the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights in 2019.

To build upon its existing efforts on human rights at the international platform, Malaysia has pledged to undertake the following commitments at the Human Rights Council (HRC) for the term 2022-2024:

- i. Take a whole-of-society approach in the promotion and protection of human rights namely in the assessment, monitoring and implementation of the UPR recommendations;
- ii. Cooperate with the Office for the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other relevant United Nations agencies towards the promotion of human rights in the country and globally;
- iii. Continue to engage constructively with the HRC and its mechanisms while espousing a moderate and balanced perspective to nurture a spirit of cooperation;
- iv. Implement policies that promote and protect the rights of the most vulnerable groups;
- v. Strengthen efforts to achieve gender equality, women empowerment and eliminate violence against women;
- vi. Take greater steps in engaging and empowering youth;
- vii. Develop a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights;
- viii. Intensify efforts to promote safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment and improve understanding of the effects of climate change on the enjoyment of human rights;
- ix. Continue to promote diversity through respect for cultural rights; and
- x. Continue to engage constructively with all Member States and stakeholders towards the full realisation of Agenda 2030.





ENDURING PRINCIPLES

# FOCUS: IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES



## I. Revitalise Malaysia's Links to the Global Economy

**The COVID-19 pandemic** continues to severely disrupt livelihoods across all countries and communities through its adverse effects on global economic growth. Global trade volumes declined by 5.3 per cent, while global foreign direct investment (FDI) fell by 42 per cent in 2020. The lack of decisive action on a united, global front has exacerbated existing protectionist sentiments, which created cascading effects on the global trade growth, globalisation and confidence in the multilateral trading system. The changes have also affected the progress of ongoing efforts towards deepening regional integration, including in Southeast Asia.

Malaysia has not been spared from the ripple effects of these disruptions. Trade and investment fell by the largest margin since the 2009 global financial crisis, with exports of goods and services contracting by 8.5 per cent while FDI fell by 55 per cent in 2020. Tourist arrivals plunged by 83 per cent, and the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted global and domestic supply chain networks.

As a vibrant trading nation, Malaysia's national interests are tied to the smooth facilitation of such sectors and related mechanisms. Foreign investment, trade and tourism have suffered due to border closures and lockdowns. An important element of recovery will be greater participation in the global economy. It has become increasingly apparent that the links between investment and trade will be crucial in our recovery plans.

### **Malaysia's Foreign Policy Objectives**

***Re-establish international travel as a matter of priority.*** Supporting safe inter-regional movement of people is vital to supporting Malaysia's economic recovery and development in addition to bolstering regional prosperity. Emphasis will be placed on accessible and fair common standards regarding testing, tracing, improved hygiene measures and treatment.

***Accelerate regional integration and ease of doing business in Southeast Asia.*** This will be bolstered through the strengthening of a free and fair multilateral trading system. Engagement with national and multinational stakeholders from the chambers of commerce and industry are essential to understand barriers toward integration and resumption of seamless cross border trade.

## **Implementation**

### ***Strengthen Malaysia's involvement in trade- and travel-related fora.***

Increased participation and advocacy in these forums will include facilitating and encouraging more engagement with business councils, trade missions and multilateral agencies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations (UN). These will be complementary to prior efforts in comprehensive long-term plans for a more visible and influential presence in multilateral financial institutions, including capitalising on Malaysia's expertise in Islamic finance.

### ***Further enhance the working relationship with relevant Government Ministries / Agencies.***

In order to restore business- and tourism-related travel, Wisma Putra will endeavour to work with the Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) to ensure that the necessary frameworks and coordination are in place so Malaysia can hit the ground running with travel bubbles and arrangements. These will include supporting the formulation of post-COVID health standards, such as digital vaccination certificates and COVID-19 testing, to boost travel confidence.

### ***Strengthen coordination and partnership with Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) on future-proofing the tourism industry.***

Long-term strategic decisions must be made as some tourism businesses might not survive even once travel restrictions are lifted, due to factors such as lower preferences for cruises due to environmental considerations and increased focus on domestic tourism due to depleted savings, economic revival efforts and isolationist policies.



## II. Health Diplomacy

**While safe and efficacious** COVID-19 vaccines were developed in a record time, only two per cent of the more than 5.5 billion doses administered globally have gone to those in low-income countries. This emerging two-track pandemic looks set to continue as high-income countries continue to stockpile vaccines, allowing them to progress into a post-COVID era. Meanwhile, the less fortunate will have to suffer the healthcare, economic and social consequences of a prolonged pandemic.

Global accountability for pandemic preparedness is imperative. At the multilateral level, the call by the World Health Organization (WHO) for greater global solidarity in ensuring global vaccine equity has fallen on deaf ears. The WHO has established a target of vaccinating 40 per cent of the population in every country and territory by the end of 2021, and at least 70 per cent by the first half of 2022. These are now at risk. There is significant room for improvement in the implementation of the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX), the global initiative for equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Beyond COVID-19, the pandemic has highlighted the need for robust and flexible health systems, and the development of the pharmaceutical industry in Malaysia. These two areas will be pivotal when, not if, the next public health crisis hits.

Malaysia must continue to push for greater global solidarity to end this pandemic for no one is safe until everyone is. It is, therefore, important that Malaysia participates actively in multilateral organisations, including having a strong presence at the World Health Assembly. At the same time, consolidated efforts must be made to bolster health systems and the domestic pharmaceutical industry. In this regard, Malaysia should also pursue efforts at global and regional levels, including cooperation on research and vaccine production.

### **Malaysia's Foreign Policy Objectives**

#### ***Establish Malaysia as a responsible actor for global public health equity.***

This includes advocating and taking the lead at multilateral platforms towards global health needs. This will bolster Malaysia's reputation as a responsible global actor while fostering greater goodwill among recipient and partner countries, reinvigorating our international presence.

#### ***Build international partnerships on public health, research and vaccine development and pharmaceutical capabilities.***

These are intended to strengthen international cooperation on public health and Malaysia's research and vaccine development, while also building the domestic pharmaceutical industry. In

the long term, this will strategically position Malaysia as a leading and influential country in research and development in the region and at international platforms while ensuring the nation is able to manage future health crises better.

***Commit to multilateral approaches to public health and global challenges.*** By demonstrating Malaysia's commitment to tackling public health challenges through multilateral frameworks, Malaysia can effectively underscore that such global public goods are better served through strengthened institutionalised international cooperation, rather than exclusive bilateral arrangements.



### **Implementation**

***Highlight vaccine inequity and access to global public health goods as a matter of priority in all international engagements.*** This agenda will include calls for 1) swapping of near-term vaccine deliveries with COVAX; 2) donor countries to fulfil their pledges as soon as possible; and 3) the sharing of technology, know-how and intellectual property to support regional vaccine manufacturing. Wisma Putra will endeavour to develop this in concert with MOH and MOSTI, and first advocated at the ASEAN level, before being escalated to the UN, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Group of 77, amongst others.

***Build Malaysia's long-term reputation and expertise on health diplomacy.*** Relevant domestic ministries such as Wisma Putra and MOH require a fixed group of experts to ensure the right human resources and capital are dedicated to its implementation, and expertise and reputation can be built over time. Past experiences of working groups and task forces towards health diplomacy have been on an *ad hoc* basis.

***Continue to contribute medical and technical aid to partner countries.*** This includes donating medical equipment and personal protective equipment (PPEs) and offering fill-and-finish capabilities to boost vaccine supplies. This will require the involvement of the respective manufacturers. Wisma Putra will seek partnership with MOH, MOSTI, National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA), MERCY Malaysia, Islamic Medical Association of Malaysia Response and Relief Team (IMARET), Global Peace Mission (GPM), public and private research institutes, and media organisations such as BERNAMA to support this endeavour.

***Develop Malaysia's pharmaceutical industry.*** Together with MOH, MOSTI, and MITI, Wisma Putra will engage countries with leading pharmaceutical industries with a view to building strategic partnerships. Wisma Putra will spearhead the relationship building process, while MOH and MOSTI match technical suitability with national objectives, and MITI facilitating incoming investment. It is critical that Malaysia commits to investing and promoting globally its expertise on pharmaceutical and medical-related industries.

### III. Digital Economy

**Since the establishment** of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) in 1996, the digital economy has been one of the pivotal drivers of Malaysia's economic growth. In 2020, the e-commerce and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sectors contributed 11.5 and 22.6 per cent respectively towards the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The Malaysian Government has produced a clear roadmap and earmarked resources for developing the digital economy. On 19 February 2021, the Government launched MyDIGITAL, which outlines plans to accelerate Malaysia's progress towards becoming a digitally driven, high-income nation and a regional leader in the digital economy. MyDIGITAL is expected to create 500,000 new job opportunities in the digital economy, which is expected to contribute 22.6 per cent of Malaysia's GDP by 2030. The Digital Investment Office (DIO), a collaborative setup between Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) and Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), was set up in April 2021 to put in place a more structured governance and coordination platform to facilitate digital investments in Malaysia.

On 1 July 2021, the Government launched the National Fourth Industrial Revolution Policy (National 4IR Policy), which is a broad, overarching national policy to boost the socio-economic development of the country through the ethical use of 4IR technologies. This objective is to be achieved by focusing on four key thrusts of the National 4IR Policy, namely: 1) Equipping Malaysians with 4IR knowledge and skillsets; 2) Forging a connected nation through digital infrastructure development; 3) Future-proofing regulations to be agile with technological changes; and 4) Expediting innovation and adaptation of 4IR technology. While digital economy issues remain outside Wisma Putra's purview, it can play a strategic supporting and enabling role focusing on the international aspects of Malaysia's digital economy agenda.

#### **Malaysia's Foreign Policy Objectives**

***Facilitate closer regional cooperation on digital economy issues.*** As frontier technologies continue to take over the world, some countries have emerged as digital frontrunners, leading discussions and setting standards for emerging norms. In line with the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, Malaysia will advocate the concept of overcoming the digital divide through regional cooperation, which addresses emerging issues such as digital infrastructure, digital innovation, logistics, regulations and talent mobility to ensure an inclusive expansion of the digital economy.





***Promote and intensify Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) diplomacy.*** The effort to mainstream the application of STI at all levels can be the vital enabler for a country to uplift its productivity, boost its competitiveness and promote inclusive growth. As Malaysia aspires to be one of the top innovation-led nations, the nation will seize the opportunity to enhance existing and initiate new global STI collaborations on, among others, technology transfers and bilateral assistance on STI funding to accelerate the transition.

***Boost foreign investment in innovation hubs across Malaysia.*** Digitally enabled firms can play a large role in converting digital technology into economic and social benefits. Creating a healthy ecosystem for them to thrive is vital in ensuring their sustained growth and digital spillover effects on our local economy. Malaysia needs to attract more high-value foreign investments in digital sectors to boost its competitiveness on the regional and international stage.

### **Implementation**

***Facilitate closer regional cooperation on digital economy issues.*** Wisma Putra will support MITI in facilitating closer regional cooperation through the implementation of trade-facilitation initiatives, facilitating the signing of digital economy agreements with other countries, expediting the rollout of the 2018 ASEAN Agreement on E-Commerce (AAEC), ASEAN Digital Masterplan 2025, and executing the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025. Wisma Putra will enhance its engagement with relevant countries and entities, including ASEAN Member States, the ASEAN Development Fund, as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and / or Ministry of International Trade of other countries.

***Boost foreign investment in innovation across Malaysia.*** Wisma Putra will support the implementation of plans to stimulate the digital economy, including MyDIGITAL and the National 4IR Policy. It will additionally support the efforts by MIDA to attract foreign investments in sectors that are critical to Malaysia's digital economy via greater investment promotion and diplomatic efforts abroad. Additionally, Wisma Putra will partner up with agencies such as MDEC and DIO to attract regional start-ups to set up operations in Malaysia and promote local innovation hubs such as Cyberjaya. Malaysia could also embark on similar initiatives such as the Newton-Ungku Omar Fund, a science and innovation partnership between the UK and Malaysia, by identifying foreign governments or funding organisations that can provide financial matching for STI capacity building.





## IV. Cybersecurity

**In light of** the growing emphasis on the digital economy, a safe and seamless cyber environment is an increasing national interest priority for Malaysia that requires the adoption of robust and forward-looking measures. Malaysia must be part of the discourse. The repercussions, should Malaysia not actively participate in ongoing discussions that will determine the laws and norms that will govern cyberspace, are severe and long-lasting.

To meaningfully participate in the relevant processes, Malaysia must successfully project its cyber aptitude, demonstrate the strength of its policies and articulate its identity as well as values pertaining to cyberspace. These are interlinked with the creation of a trusted Malaysian cyber ecosystem, which boosts prospects for digital economy growth.

Cybersecurity is no longer merely a technical challenge. It increasingly encompasses broader strategic social, economic and military implications which demand both frameworks and political actions in both the domestic and international spheres. As threats in cyber space are opaque and dependent on various inter-state cooperation mechanisms to perform threat assessments, stability in cyberspace relies on diplomatic practices that enable cooperation with various stakeholders. Future Malaysian cyber frameworks, particularly cyber diplomacy, will consider established best practices and multilateral cooperative arrangements that would leverage on Malaysia's interests and capabilities to shape international discourse and build trust in Malaysia's cyber branding and ecosystem.

### **Malaysia's Foreign Policy Objectives**

***Develop and articulate Malaysia's identity and values in cyberspace.*** The identity and values will seek to establish both our positions and interests on cyber issues and can be gleaned from traditionally held principles and other national interests. They will include: 1) an advocate of tech neutrality, which not only highlights the freedoms to decide which technology to adopt without undue pressure but transparent regional oversight mechanisms, confidence-building measures and partnerships with the private sector; 2) a responsible state in cyberspace, which entails both the domestic protection of systems, data and users and active participation in international mechanisms that encourage responsible state behaviour in tech and cyberspace; 3) pro-innovation and prosperity, where future engagements and policies are aimed an inclusive coordination of public agencies and the private sector toward broad based and inclusive cyber-focused innovation and economic growth; 4) an upholder of digital rights and cultural values, where the principles of diversity, tolerance and respect will frame how Malaysia approaches the regulation of telecommunication, data access, privacy,

surveillance and content moderation; 5) a proponent of multi-stakeholder processes, by not just supporting multilateral cyber mechanisms but encouraging and facilitating the participation of the private sector and CSO in such networks or mechanisms; 6) supportive of home-grown cyber initiatives like the Cyber Security Empowerment Programme (SiberKASA), which aims to holistically develop, empower and sustain the nation's cybersecurity ecosystem; and 7) to leverage on government-to-government cooperation with ASEAN Member States to promote national programmes of SiberKASA whenever possible especially to the countries that lack cyber security initiatives.

***Build cyber diplomacy as Malaysia's cybersecurity niche.*** Bilateral and multilateral diplomacy play a key role in the evolution of cybersecurity and cyber policies, between the public and private sectors, international organisations or between governments. Countries that lead the global discourse on cybersecurity and cyber policies such as Australia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany and UK have all developed cyber portfolio within their foreign ministries or have specialist Ambassadors-at-large to deal with cyber affairs. Cyber and digital technologies are the catalysts for development and future economic activities and these cyber-diplomats would be crucial to pave the way for enhancing Malaysia's cyber capabilities and safeguarding our interests.

### **Implementation**

***Support the undertaking of a national interest assessment to guide Malaysia's international cyber engagements.*** This comprehensive assessment will identify Malaysia's cyber priorities, positions and interests. It will stock-take the activities of various domestic and international engagement by ministries, agencies and state governments. The assessment will be aligned with the priorities of the National Cyber Security Strategy 2020-2024 and will further develop Malaysia's cybersecurity values, which would guide engagements and future statements in bilateral and multilaterals settings, or in engagement with the private sector.

***Train a cadre of cyber diplomats.*** To prepare for a more robust engagement in cyber diplomacy, Wisma Putra, together with CyberSecurity Malaysia, will develop the necessary specialist knowledge on cyber-related matters, especially those concerning cybersecurity, Big Tech and relevant international regulations. These diplomats will then need to consistently engage in cyber-related fora to ensure they are up to date with a constantly evolving subject.

**Identify cyber-specific platforms and agreements for international engagement.** Malaysia will undertake an assessment to consider signing on to the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace or the Budapest Convention, as well as other future treaties that concern digital economy or critical technologies. Malaysia will also boost its cyber diplomacy profile in selected multilateral platforms like ASEAN, OIC, the Commonwealth and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). These platforms will serve as a pool to exchange views and best practices on issues like data governance and consular roles, deterrence as a diplomatic strategy in cyber and the role of diplomacy with Big Tech. Wisma Putra will consider working closely with the ASEAN Cross-Sectoral Coordinating Committee to scale up Malaysian examples of implementing the 11 voluntary and non-binding norms recommended in the 2015 United Nations Group of Governmental Experts (UNGGE) on Information Security Report. In addition, Malaysia needs a strong private and public collaboration to enhance its cyber resilience and capabilities to become a strong cyber nation and have an influence in the international arena.



**Support processes such as the UNGGE and Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on developments in the field of ICT in the context of international security.** Currently, the OEWG has renewed its mandate from 2021-2025. The Track Two OEWG also features an informal track for private sector and civil society participation. Encouraging and facilitating Malaysian private sector and CSO participation in this space will boost Malaysia's profile in these areas, alongside Wisma Putra's contributions to the formal OEWG sessions. More broadly, Wisma Putra will also work with CyberSecurity Malaysia and other security stakeholders to engage in relevant regional and global platforms to help reduce cyber tensions, hostile activities and aggression, especially in Southeast Asia that are caused by geopolitical conflicts and territorial disputes.

## V. Cultural Diplomacy

**Malaysia** derives its strength as a nation from its sheer diversity. Our multicultural society is a source of comparative advantage that Malaysia aims to project to the international community. The Government will tell the story of Malaysia; a complex nation-building project that continues to uphold national values of moderation, peace and harmony. The Malaysian identity is an eclectic tapestry drawing from its mix of distinct but intertwined cultures, philosophy and thoughts, and has given rise to art, music, food and sports as well as language, literature and culture that are simultaneously relatable, inclusive and unique.

Malaysia will work towards showcasing the unique attributes of its identity as part of its cultural assets and reinforce national branding as many of our neighbouring nations have done to become known for arts, culture, tourism, cuisines and sports. Icons of Malaysian culture now go beyond the Petronas Twin Towers or resplendent beaches and greenery.

Malaysia already has a number of items on the intangible cultural heritage list under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), such as Mak Yong, Dondang Sayang, Silat and Ong Chun. Malaysia has many more cultural assets to showcase to the world, all of which could be used to communicate the values that convey the nation's foreign policy decisions. With Malaysia's rich national prehistory dating back to the Stone Age and with the Malay Peninsula having high historical significance as a trade route, elements of its civilisation, history and heritage should also be preserved and shared with the world.



Beyond natural history, heritage and modern-day culture, Malaysia will promote the sharing of civilisational dialogue and social policies with other countries. The nation will embrace a shared regional culture, of which sports will serve as one of its facets, while simultaneously highlighting Malaysia's unique qualities. It should also tap into the resources and skillsets of Malaysian diaspora by encouraging and incentivising participation in Malaysia-themed cultural events abroad.

Beyond utilising these assets in cultural diplomacy, Malaysia will also practice continuity in its efforts to keep positive aspects of the nation uppermost in the minds of other nations, ensuring that global perception of the nation is consistent with its domestic values of diversity, tolerance and respect.



### **Malaysia's Foreign Policy Objectives**

***Project Malaysia's national identity and values.*** An underlying but key aim of Malaysia's cultural diplomacy is to underscore Malaysia's identity and values as a tolerant and multicultural society, confident and proud of its heritage but also cosmopolitan in its outlook. Also reflected in the conduct of our foreign relations are Malaysia's aspirations for the international community, which embody the values that have brought our diverse community together. This includes a desire for a more just and equitable world.







**Promote Malaysian culture in a manner that allows for long-term continuity.** Malaysia must spotlight its commitment to diversity and multiculturalism by displaying and showcasing cultural assets that encapsulate these values. Efforts will be directed towards promoting Malaysia’s rich creative industry through deeper and closer ties with other countries. As defined by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), this creative industry encompasses four (4) components and nine (9) sub-components as follows:

HERITAGE	ARTS	MEDIA	FUNCTIONAL CREATIONS
<b>Traditional cultural expressions</b>  Arts crafts Festivals Celebrations	<b>Visual arts</b>  Painting Sculpture Antique Photography	<b>Publishing and printed media</b>  Books Newspapers Press Other publications	<b>Design</b>  Interior Graphic Fashion Jewellery Toys
<b>Cultural sites</b>  Historical monuments Museums Libraries Archives	<b>Performing arts</b>  Live music Theatre Dance Opera Puppetry Circus	<b>Audio visuals</b>  Film Television Radio	<b>Creative services</b>  Architecture Advertising Creative R&D Cultural services Digital services
		<b>New media</b>  Digitalised content Software Video games Animations	



***Emphasise cultural and sports outreach and exchange.*** By engaging with relevant stakeholders and promoting Malaysia's strengths, the nation will boost cultural and sports diplomacy measures and encourage multilateralism in a variety of sectors that will result in both intangible soft power benefits as well as economic benefits.

### **Implementation**

***Promote and support Malaysian arts and sports abroad.*** Wisma Putra will engage with creative industries that oversee or facilitate the said components such as the Malaysian Music Industry Corporation (PIMM), the National Art Gallery and the National Film Development Corporation Malaysia (FINAS) to support Malaysian art. This cross-ministry effort could result in heritage or cultural centres being set up in key cultural capitals to promote Malaysian icons ranging from architectural exhibitions in collaboration with design institutes to food festivals and horticultural shows. Traditional cultural expressions such as rattan and bamboo weaving, beadwork and metal crafts will also be promoted. There should also be a renewed focus on promoting Malaysian sports, namely sepak takraw and silat, to the global audience.

***Encourage and facilitate international educational cooperation in areas such as language, literature, culture, politics, traditional arts and food.***

This includes liaising with Malaysian higher education institutions to incentivise and encourage semesters or internships abroad, or trainings and workshops with regional cultural revival / restoration bodies. The focus will be on programmes through universities, museums and think tanks that discuss, among others, Malaysian art, laws and culture. Wisma Putra will further collaborate with culture-related groups such as *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*, *Institut Terjemahan dan Buku Malaysia*, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, International Islamic University Malaysia (ISTAC-IIUM), Department of Museums Malaysia, Malaysian Heritage Trust (*Badan Warisan Malaysia*) and PUSAKA as well as independent experts.

***Engage UNESCO, MOTAC, Ministry of Communications and Multimedia and NGOs to preserve and promote various forms of heritage.***

This includes intangible cultural heritage, food heritage, languages and historic sites. Malaysia's reporting on the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage will be submitted by the end of 2024, giving the nation a year to escalate cultural conservation efforts. There should also be a focus on promoting a shared regional culture, with officials engaging in multilateral and bilateral efforts to preserve and popularise certain cultural assets that simultaneously exist across geographical borders.





## VI. Peaceful Coexistence

***At a time*** where identity and nationalist politics threaten to edge out values of moderation and tolerance, it is more important than ever to highlight and champion the concept of peaceful coexistence. Identity politics, religious extremism and hyper-nationalism invariably exacerbate both traditional and non-traditional security challenges such as terrorism, forced migration and territorial disputes.

Underlying the concept of peaceful coexistence is the conviction that societies of different ideological, racial or religious makeups can live and indeed thrive with each other in peace. In other words, peaceful coexistence presumes that friction and conflict are far from inevitable, especially if those societies commit themselves towards dialogue and developing mutual understanding.

Promoting peaceful coexistence is not only an intellectual or conceptual exercise. It is the practical application of diplomacy and moderation (*wasatiyyah*) to prevent conflicts. A key step would be to promote dialogue, consultation and establish common ground between societies of diverse backgrounds with the inclusive participation and representation of all segments of society, including women and youth, in the overall processes. A parallel effort would be to create the conditions that are conducive to human security, principally through economic cooperation and development.

### **Malaysia's Foreign Policy Objectives**

***Underscore Malaysia's achievements as a trusted and successful broker for peace.*** Malaysia's involvement in efforts towards peaceful resolution of conflict in the Southeast Asian region, particularly in southern Philippines and southern Thailand, has placed it in a position where it could lend its expertise and share its experience in the pursuit for peace. The evolving nature of peacebuilding and Malaysia's experience should be effectively harnessed and marketed in order to position Malaysia as a credible facilitator and partner of choice for peace-making and peacebuilding. This will concurrently enhance Malaysia's soft power to attract other nations as well as international organisations to seek partnerships, allowing Malaysia to create broader networks which lend to greater flexibility in the conduct of our foreign relations.

## Implementation

***Leverage on lessons learnt and best practices.*** Wisma Putra will work with relevant agencies to compile and capitalise on the lessons learnt from facilitating the peacebuilding process in the southern Philippines and reviewing its applicability for other potential hotspots in Asia and beyond. This will result in a workable, comprehensive approach in peacebuilding that Wisma Putra can market as a uniquely Malaysian achievement.

***Position Malaysia as a regional centre for dialogue and peacebuilding.*** Wisma Putra will work with multiple stakeholders to position Kuala Lumpur as a regional centre for dialogue and peacebuilding initiatives. Towards this end, Wisma Putra will work with international organisations, CSO and countries that have well-established reputations in this area, particularly the Nordic countries, to enhance Malaysia's capacity for conflict resolution.

***Position Malaysia as an international development partner of choice.*** Malaysia will undertake the formative steps on the expansion of the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP) into a full-fledged development and aid agency. Malaysia should no longer continue to regard itself as a developing country with limited means to provide support for others. A more comprehensive agency will equip Malaysia with the focus and capacity to mount targeted and effective outreach on this and other fronts.



## VII. Upholding Multilateralism

***The increasing turn*** towards unilateralism in recent years has eroded international solidarity and undermined international order. The intensifying rivalries overshadow cooperation on issues of common concern and increasingly subject these issues to deals made between major powers or within smaller groupings such as the G7.

The global pandemic has further worsened the momentum of international cooperation. National responses to the COVID-19 pandemic prioritised domestic concerns, sometimes resulting in nationalist-isolationist policies. The global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic offers an opportune moment to reinvigorate multilateralism to meet the new challenges of today. In upholding multilateralism, there must be greater synergy to recover globally in a manner that ensures the gap between developed and developing countries is not further aggravated. More inclusive multilateral and decision-making processes are required.

### **Malaysia's Foreign Policy Objectives**

***Promote multilateral approaches towards solving regional and global issues through cooperation with like-minded countries.*** By promoting multilateralism and cooperating with like-minded countries, Malaysia will play an active role in a sustainable global recovery. Malaysia will identify partners with similar challenges, objectives, predispositions and capabilities which will then create a more goals-driven system in multilateral engagements. Malaysia will foster greater international solidarity by cooperating on issues of common concern, most notably the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Malaysia will also cooperate on non-traditional security issues such as climate change, cybersecurity and food security. Pursuing multilateralism will help build a more coherent international framework which adequately addresses these multi-level, multi-faceted challenges.

***Advocate for a robust global multilateral trading system to address protectionism and isolationism.*** The pandemic has pushed for better implementation of more resilient trade systems and functional interdependence to facilitate economic recovery. The signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership is a good example of this. Malaysia will adopt a more proactive stance and leverage upon this newfound momentum to drive trade-related objectives set by these multilateral frameworks, in line with its own interests. As an active member of the OIC, Malaysia will also play a larger leadership role and lead initiatives that bring equitable benefits to OIC countries. With a Malaysian currently serving as the Secretary-General of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, Malaysia will play a more prominent role in harmonising efforts towards enhancing trade cooperation. Malaysia will propose a check-and-balance mechanism to ensure that targets are reached with tangible outputs.

***Re-energise ASEAN to push for more progress in addressing the situation in Myanmar.*** It is in Malaysia's national interest to work towards the stability of Myanmar, especially considering the consistent flows of asylum-seekers from Myanmar to Malaysia. Malaysia will continue to urge all ASEAN Member States to actively address the problem in Myanmar and push for greater will to act proactively on the situation. There must be greater solidarity between all Member States on this regional issue so that ASEAN can more effectively seek a peaceful resolution. Malaysia must pursue closer coordination and deeper engagement with all stakeholders involved in Myanmar, especially like-minded ASEAN Member States and Dialogue Partners. By promoting multilateral diplomacy, Malaysia will work towards achieving tangible political and humanitarian outcomes.

### **Implementation**

***Enhance coordination with MITI to promote regional trade and investment.*** As a trading nation, closer coordination and collaboration between Wisma Putra and MITI is needed to achieve Malaysia's economic goals. Wisma Putra will coordinate with existing structures, resources and agencies of MITI such as MATRADE, MIDA and InvestKL to support the promotion of Malaysia as an attractive investment hub. Wisma Putra will actively and consistently collaborate with MITI, both at home and at Malaysia's Diplomatic Missions abroad. This will enhance Wisma Putra's ability to achieve Malaysia's trade-related objectives in multilateral frameworks. Malaysia will also play a more prominent role in supporting partner countries to enhance their Halal industries. This will promote trade and contribute to building sustainable food stocks. Wisma Putra will work closely with the Halal Development Corporation Berhad to facilitate this.

***Channel additional resources to promote multilateral solutions in addressing challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.*** The high-tempo nature of the various engagements, initiatives and lobbying requires that additional resources, backed by unambiguous political support, be directed toward key Malaysian representations where such solutions are formulated and promulgated. Such a commitment would also signal Malaysia's resolve and commitment to the UN-led processes, especially the three founding pillars of peace and security, human rights and development.





## VIII. Sustainable Development Goals

**Malaysia** regards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a crucial part of its long-term development plans. The SDGs are embedded in the Twelfth Malaysia Plan (2021-2025), which was presented by the YAB Prime Minister, Dato' Sri Ismail Sabri bin Yaakob, to Parliament on 27 September 2021. The 17 interlinked global goals of the SDGs are reflected across all three dimensions of the Twelfth Malaysia Plan, namely economic empowerment, environmental sustainability and social re-engineering. The Prime Minister also announced that Malaysia will be carbon neutral as early as 2050 alongside a commitment to stop building new coal-fired power plants.

The Sixth Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report has put beyond doubt the urgency of climate action with UN Secretary General António Guterres calling it a “code red for humanity.” Due the nature of the challenge that requires collective action and trans-boundary cooperation, climate change and sustainability in general, has become a key focus in foreign affairs. Its projected impact to human security such as increased vulnerability to disasters as well as the rise of trade barriers and conflicts, namely, Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, that arise from climate action will require every nation, including Malaysia, to address climate change and sustainability as a foreign policy strategy.

In line with the overall aim of “building back better”, sustainable development has become a major theme for COVID-19 recovery. The SDGs have become the reference point for global development. In 2015, two major international instruments – the SDGs and the Paris Climate Agreement – elevated the status of both environment and sustainable development as an international policy agenda.

Conferences such as the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) and other platforms such as WTO, UNGA, and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) are increasingly interlinked. This requires a strategy and coherent narrative on sustainable development, as well as emerging global frameworks for financing sustainable development, including through development cooperation and assistance.

### **Malaysia's Foreign Policy Objectives**

#### ***Position Malaysia as a champion of SDGs and sustainable development.***

Malaysia has a good track record on the sustainable development agenda in addressing issues such as poverty and inequality, human wellbeing concerns such as health, education, housing as well as sustainability issues in its management of the natural resources and in fostering peace and harmonious living in a multicultural country. Malaysia will reclaim its erstwhile role in global diplomacy on



sustainability and playing an active role in this issue would create opportunities for Malaysia to engage various countries, including those from the West, on other matters that more directly affect the nation. In line with our geopolitical aspirations, the SDGs provide an opportunity to be utilised for niche diplomacy and “punch above our weight” to influence international development discourse via conference diplomacy and agenda setting as well as development cooperation. This is a continuation to the active role played by Malaysia in Millennium Development Goals and the Rio conferences in the preparation to the SDGs which was adopted by UNGA in September 2015. Further, this will accord Malaysia with the opportunity to strategically position its SDGs implementation via capacity building and technical cooperation.

***Undertake strategic actions to address shortcomings on sustainability.***

Shortcomings on environmental sustainability and labour rights continue to have a negative impact on the country’s image and trade. Thus, it is crucial to ensure these shortcomings are addressed.

***Coordinated strategy on sustainable development issues at the multilateral level.***

Environmental diplomacy and sustainable development cut across various international issues and multilateral arrangements including the nexus across environment, development and trade. Issues such as climate adjustment border mechanisms require the intersection between foreign, trade and environmental policies.

## **Implementation**

***Position Malaysia as a champion of SDGs and sustainable development.***

Malaysia will utilise multilateral conferences at the international and regional platforms to highlight its commitment to SDGs and influence the discourse on the implementation of SDGs. Besides that, Malaysia will also undertake a leadership role in ASEAN for SDGs by playing an active role at various ASEAN-related platforms including, but not limited to, the Asia Pacific Sustainable Development Forum, the annual High-Level Brainstorming Dialogue on Enhancing Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025, the ASEAN Forum on SDGs with National Development Planning Agencies as well as the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly. It is also important to promote Malaysia’s SDGs localisation model through the APPGM-SDGs as a whole-of-society approach at South-South cooperation dialogues and bilateral dialogues with leading SDGs-implementing countries. Sustainable investments in Malaysia are to be better promoted, focusing on its efforts for Environmental, Social and Governance and as a sustainable financial hub through collaboration and coordination with MITI and MOF. Coordination of strategic objectives with the Ministry of Environment and Water (KASA) for promoting investments on green technology such as at the Expo 2020 Dubai will also be undertaken.

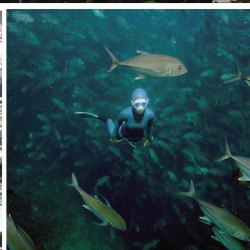
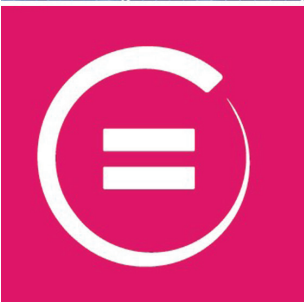
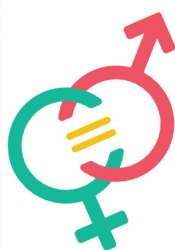
***Counter criticisms on sustainability constructively and strategically.***

Coordinate strategic communication to counter criticisms of the palm oil industry with the Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities, Ministry of Human Resources, Malaysian Palm Oil Board, Malaysian Palm Oil Association and the Malaysian Palm Oil Council. Malaysia will also proactively host bilateral dialogues, especially on palm oil, with relevant trading partners including China, EU, India and US.

***Strengthen participation in SDGs-related global and regional events.***

In enhancing its international presence, the possibility of hosting side events at the sidelines of major programmes such as High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) should be explored.

***A coordinated strategy on sustainable development.*** Wisma Putra will pursue a coordinated foreign policy strategy on sustainable development, in addressing issues such as poverty, inequality and human rights as well as sustainability with trade and security, in collaboration with the Economic Planning Unit, MITI, and KASA alongside the private sector, civil society and academics.



# CONCLUSION



**The Framework** for Malaysia's Foreign Policy in a Post-Pandemic World is not a realignment from the established tenets of Malaysia's foreign policy or its national interests. Neither does it mark a radical departure in Malaysia's diplomatic and outreach strategies to the world.

Instead, this Framework seeks to identify the significant changes and developments in the international environment which Malaysia now finds itself operating in and how these could impact Malaysia and its interests. While much of these changes were brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, the roots of much of these disruptions long predated the global pandemic.

The emerging post-pandemic world will provide unprecedented room for bilateral and multilateral positioning. It is, therefore, incumbent on Malaysia to identify both opportunities and challenges that will allow the country to best leverage on its competitive advantages.

The Framework further seeks to identify emerging foreign policy priorities and implementation guides for the multiple stakeholders of Malaysia's foreign policy establishment, especially Wisma Putra, its agencies and Malaysia's Diplomatic Missions abroad.

A key foundation in the development of this Framework has been Wisma Putra's commitment to a people-centric, meaningful and open consultative engagement with its various stakeholders. Consultation and cooperation, between Wisma Putra, other ministries and agencies, the private sector and CSO, will be a key mechanism for moving forward on many of the identified priorities and strategies.





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