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## PRESS STATEMENT

### TINDAK MALAYSIA LAUNCHES SARAWAK REDELINEATION PORTAL

Tindak Malaysia, an electoral reform advocacy group, launches [Sarawak Redelineation Portal](#) to assist all voters, local authorities, state government, political parties and Election Commission (EC) in formulating fair electoral boundaries for Sarawak. As eight years have lapsed from the 2015 redelineation exercise in Sarawak, EC may carry a redelineation exercise anytime and is presented the opportunity to create Accessible (A), Representative (R) and Equal (E) – ARE – constituencies.

Tindak Malaysia, which has been exploring the redelineation topic since 2011, is of the view that the voters of Sarawak and all relevant stakeholders of Sarawak to be ready for any redelineation exercise to be carried out by EC. Currently, Sarawak constituencies are grossly malapportioned and experienced significant gerrymandering. According to GE15 Electoral Statistics provided by EC, the most populous constituency is Senadin (68 564 voters) in Miri and smallest electorate constituency is Gedong (10 067 voters). This has created massive urban - rural gap and constitutes a complete disregard of One Person, One Vote, One Value (OPOVOV). Moreover, EC has created some polling districts in 2015 – one of the foundations of constituency formation – that neither respects of voter equality nor constitutes proper depiction of local ties. Sarawak is home to the most populous polling district in Malaysia – Kuala Baram (53 111 voters in GE15) in Senadin - and the volume of voters found in Kuala Baram is sufficient to make one equal sized parliamentary constituency in Sarawak. This explains why DUN Senadin and parent Parliamentary seat of Miri is grossly oversized. Some of the polling districts in Sibu (e.g., Teku) and Sri Aman (e.g., Sengat) are drawn such that the polling district is internally divided by a massive river or arbitrarily connected via a land neck. Several polling districts were drawn in non-conformance to divisional/district/local council boundaries. Some of the Sarawak constituencies bear hallmarks of gerrymandering. DUN Batu Kitang (in Greater Kuching area) exhibits highly irregular shape, and this can be attributed to both of extreme irregularity of certain polling districts and arbitrary grouping of polling districts.

Asides the above issue, Tindak Malaysia, informed of its past experiences, finds historical approaches of EC for the redelineation process as grossly inadequate. When EC issued notice via gazette and newspaper about the provisionally determined constituencies, the 2015 – 18 Malaysian redelineation experiences have shown that EC insufficiently communicated the effects of the proposed recommendations to the voters, local authorities and state governments. Within 30 days of review period and limited information provided by EC historically, voters are supposed to analyse, formulate a representation view, gather at least 100 objectors and submit the list of objectors together with the written representations.

In October 2023, Tindak Malaysia have taken proactive steps to present to Malaysian public and various stakeholders on how fair boundaries of Sarawak could look like. Tindak Malaysia has submitted this redelineation portal link and detailed explanation to our EC Commissioners. In addition to that, Tindak Malaysia have communicated about the presence of Electoral Redistricting App (an application jointly built by International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

(International IDEA), The Association for Elections and Democracy, Indonesia (PERLUDEM), QGIS Indonesia with the inputs of Tindak Malaysia and a prominent Japanese Political Scientist) to EC so that EC can lay the foundations for fair constituencies. Tindak Malaysia hopes EC is grounded on solid truths about fair redelineation and derive useful lessons from Tindak Malaysia website on how to communicate on the effects of proposed recommendation in an effective manner. Tindak Malaysia is in discussion with other NGOs and stakeholders to prepare themselves for future redelineation representation work and setting expectations on the EC and Parliament (being the final approver of the redelineation process). For the public, Tindak Malaysia is open for feedback on how to refine the redelineation proposal from today till 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023. Moreover, Tindak Malaysia is seeking voters of Sarawak to register with Tindak Malaysia to be future redelineation objectors (an important voter group to ensure EC uphold redelineation principles). Instructions for feedback communication and objector registrations are found on the portal link.

Within the current constraints of the federal and state constitutions, Tindak Malaysia aims to have equalize all DUN constituencies to have an electorate size of +/-20% of average DUN size. Unfortunately, the oversized polling district presence in Miri have resulted two DUNs being oversized and four DUNs undersized. Since Sarawak has 31 parliament and 82 DUN constituencies, EC is not expected to equalize all DUNs and Parliamentary constituencies concurrently (as Sarawak no longer practices principle of Simple Multiple for DUN size). By maintaining strict limits on DUN electorate sizes, the foundations for fair parliamentary constituencies are built. Tindak Malaysia is of the view that Sarawak still have geographical and communication challenges and hence slightly wide latitude (+/-20%) for DUN constituency electorate sizes is justifiable. However, Sarawak and federal state governments bear significant responsibility to strengthen physical and communication networks for interior constituencies. Voters of Sarawak should demand this responsibility to be carried out.

For constituency shapes, Tindak Malaysia aims to strive constituencies to respect local council, district and division boundaries so long equalization of constituencies are attained. Tindak Malaysia proposed constituencies may not necessarily adhere to such boundaries if local council or district boundaries violate local ties (e.g., Majlis Perbandaran Padawan). Moreover, Tindak Malaysia have shown the distribution of government schools (preferred polling centres) as marker whether specific areas require more polling facilities (to comply with redelineation principles).

The launch of Sarawak Redelineation portal comes after the recent joint statement between Tindak Malaysia, Bersih, PERLUDEM and International IDEA entitled Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Apportionment and Boundary Delimitation (October 2023). This declaration aspires for more stricter view on constituency electorate sizes, contiguity of constituencies and calls for redelineation authorities to make information available for voters to make representations.

Tindak Malaysia hopes all relevant stakeholders for future Sarawak redelineation exercise (including EC) can leverage the data and interactive maps of the portal on the following grounds such as:

- 1) EC to learn and adopt parts or whole of the Sarawak Redelineation proposal,
- 2) Members of Parliamentary Special Select Committee on Human Rights, Election and Institutional Reform and Members of Parliament to adopt stricter views on redelineation,
- 3) Political Parties of Sarawak to assess the Sarawak Redelineation proposal,
- 4) NGOs and outreach groups in Sarawak to mobilize future redelineation objectors.

Tindak Malaysia is of the view that future Sarawak Redelineation exercise as proposed by EC presents an opportunity to build ARE constituencies. Fair Redelineation for whole of Malaysia can start from

Sarawak. It is on all Malaysians including EC to assess Tindak Malaysia's proposed constituencies and lay the foundation of fair redelineation.

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Director,

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