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Getting together to promote sustainable agenda

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A GROUP of concerned Malaysians met for the first time recently to bounce off ideas on how to push the country's agenda for sustainable development further.

Two former science advisers to the prime minister, Tan Sri Dr Omar Abdul Rahman and Tan Sri Dr Zakri Abdul Hamid, hosted the conversation together with a prominent former lawmaker. The group comprised personalities from academia, industry, politics and civil society who were a diverse mix of demographics, including age, gender, ethnicity and ideologies.

Their mission is to help all Malaysians understand the agenda for sustainable development and its relevance to the nation now and in the future.

Looking at the UN Sustainable Development Goals – all 17 of them – we know that it would be next to impossible to achieve any of them if there is no buy-in from the people.

Hence, it is this group's mission to reach out to all, especially the policy makers, through a series



of conversations that they are planning to organise.

We all know that sustainability is a double-edged sword for any nation. There are opportunities, and there are risks as well. The strategy is how to maximise the opportunities and reduce the risks.

For Malaysia, sustainability offers many opportunities that we can capitalise on. We are, for example, blessed with many renewable resources.

Our major crop, oil palm, is renewable and can easily com-

pete with rival oils on sustainability. Our natural rubber, though now much reduced in production, is unmatched in its renewable nature compared with other competing elastomeric materials, especially synthetic rubber.

As the world embraces the net zero pathway, we stand to gain from our renewables. But we need to continuously communicate their sustainable character.

To do this, we must take advantage of our presence at international meetings like the annual United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP) to showcase our renewables. COPs are widely covered by the international media, but we have not put in much effort in recent years to be noticed by them.

The group believes that our delegation to the next COP, which will be held in Dubai from Nov 30 to Dec 12 this year, should be led by the prime minister and a credible delegation should accompany him to actively send positive messages about how we are committed to the sustainable agenda. We need to promote the

many renewables that we can offer to the world.

We understand from press reports that Indonesia will be sending around 600 delegates, and issues pertaining to energy transition and carbon trading will likely be at the forefront of their agenda. Indonesia's participation is meant to show to the world that they are towing the line on tackling climate change and, more importantly, they also want to improve their bidding for climate funding.

We should showcase to the world the initiatives offered by government agencies like Seda (Sustainable Energy Development Authority) that have positively contributed to reducing greenhouse emissions in the country. Another initiative is the conversion of our empty fruit bunches from the palm oil industry into energy.

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