

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

## Protecting children's rights in the media

*At UNICEF Media Policymakers Seminar*

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**WELCOME ADDRESS BY**

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**Yang Berhormat Senator Dato' Sri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil,**

Minister of Women, Family and Community Development

**Distinguished senior representatives of the media.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Good morning, Selamat Pagi and welcome to the UNICEF Breakfast Seminar – an exciting step towards fostering a strong partnership with media owners and regulators in Malaysia to better protect children in the media.

There is no doubt that children are much-loved in the media because they are genuine, charming and endearing.

Giving children the platform to appear in the media is a laudable move towards upholding children's participation as one of the guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Children have the right to express their views and have their views heard. Thus, concerted effort is needed to ensure that there is room and a welcome for children in the media, not just as the talent of the future, but as contributing members of society.

Yet it is just as important to balance the need to protect children when they participate in the media.

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In Malaysia, the media is regulated both by the state as well as by the industry itself. There are laws, policies and codes of conduct that include special mention of the vulnerability of children and the need to protect them.

But aside from these existing regulations, we believe that media industries also have a role to play in upholding the principles of the CRC, by reflecting on, and recognising the implications of the CRC on their work as media practitioners.

Technical quality and compliance with the laws of the land is only one aspect of media regulation. Regulation of content and the behaviour of media professionals is an even more fraught arena of debate.

Media industries are become increasingly deregulated and 'the market' has more opportunities to decide on what is, or is not, acceptable. This puts the industry at an important crossroads – to incorporate children in the media agenda while staying aware of the risk factors that accompany children's involvement.

Protecting children in the media requires truthful, accurate and ethical reporting about children; portrayals of children in stories and advertisements that do not perpetuate stereotypes or cause discrimination; and protecting children who are involved in media production work.

It is for the media to balance these needs, while staying true to their principles of freedom and independence of thought.

We are very encouraged by the diverse participation at today's seminar and the commitment from various sectors within the industry. You are sending a strong signal that children's rights and protection are a priority for the media.

On this note, I am honoured to hand the floor over to Dato' Sri Shahrizat, and I look forward to a stimulating and constructive dialogue among us today.

Thank you.