UN Envoy Commends Malaysia’s Minimum Wage Adoption

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 18 (Bernama) — The United Nations (UN) on Wednesday commended the adoption of minimum wage in Malaysia, which it says could help to ensure a higher standard of living for the working poor across the country.

UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food Olivier De Schutter said the introduction of the minimum wage should also help to ensure the working poor were not left behind in Malaysia’s move towards high-income status.

While De Schutter welcomed the adoption of the minimum wage as a means to ensure more equitable development, he also expressed concern over the rate at which the minimum wage was set.

“The minimum wage of RM800 a month in the Peninsular and RM600 in Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan, which would be enforced on Jan 1 next year, is still quite low in comparison to the poverty line defined by the government itself based on the basic needs of households.”

“I would hope the National Wages Consultative Council would in time increase the level of the minimum wage,” he told a press conference at the end of his first official visit to the country, here.

During his nine-day visit to assess the realisation of the right to food in Malaysia, De Schutter held consultations with a range of ministries and consulted broadly across civil society.

His report would be presented on March 10, 2014 in Geneva, Switzerland to the Human Rights Council, the 47-member human rights intergovernmental body of the UN.

As Malaysia moves towards becoming a high-income country, De Schutter said the country must ensure that growth was not achieved at the expense of the environment and rights of vulnerable groups in society, such as the indigenous communities and migrant workers.

“Malaysia has made impressive progress towards the reduction of poverty and has improved on all socio-economic indicators. As it moves towards becoming a high-income country, it must address what may be called ‘second-generation’ development issues,” he said.

The second-generation development issues include resilient and sustainable food systems, minimum wage, social protection and the rights of indigenous people, he said.

De Schutter also hoped that the considerations provided in his report would be helpful in guiding the government to achieve its target to transform Malaysia into an advanced, high income country by 2020.

— BERNAMA

We provide (subscription-based) news coverage in our Newswire service.