



Waterfall near Pyin Oo Lwin city in Myanmar. Known as the City of Flowers, the area attracts visitors to its many ecotourism spots. Photo by Aung Ko Oo

## A message of hope for the ASEAN's threatened biodiversity

By Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim

The ASEAN region's relentless campaign to conserve and protect its rich but highly threatened biodiversity and ecosystems, took centre stage in the International Conference on Biodiversity hosted by Thailand from 22 to 24 May 2019. With no less than the Princess of the Kingdom of Thailand, Her Royal Highness Maha Chakri Sirindhorn gracing the opening ceremonies, the event emphasised the importance of biodiversity to the quality of human life and the economy.

The ASEAN region occupies only three per cent of the world's total area, yet its mountains, forests, rivers, lakes, and seas are home to almost 20 per cent of the world's known plant and animal species assessed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. The region is endowed with a diversity of forests, marine areas, oceans and wetlands, and many ASEAN Member States (AMS) share common biodiversity-rich boundaries, possessing rich natural and cultural resources that provide a variety of ecosystem services, such as provision of food, clean air, and potable water; regulation of natural processes like decomposition of wastes, nutrient cycling, and pollination

of crops and other plants; as well as providing spiritual and cultural significance. All these biodiversity and ecosystem services are key to the survival, development, well-being, and prosperity of some 650 million ASEAN citizens.

### Development taking its toll on the environment

The ASEAN region has been experiencing rapid economic growth and modernisation. In fact, the ASEAN is known to be the world's fifth largest, and Asia's third largest economy, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) valued at approximately USD 2.8 trillion in 2017. This is almost four and a half times the GDP value in 2000 which is valued at USD 615 billion.

Moreover, the region's economic development is highlighted by the ever-increasing tourist arrivals, from 42 million in 2001 to 115 million in 2016, and is expected to expand by an average of 6.4 per cent per annum until 2026. In addition, Southeast Asia boasts of thriving manufacturing and export industries, with exports

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increasing from USD 1.9 trillion in 2008 to USD 2.5 trillion in 2017.

However, along with this economic advancement comes escalating consumption and ever-increasing threats to biodiversity, such as pollution, terrestrial and marine debris, land conversion, irresponsible mining, illegal wildlife trade, and the introduction and proliferation of invasive alien species. Inevitably, development sectors, including infrastructure, agriculture and fisheries, mining, energy, and tourism, have direct and indirect impacts on biodiversity and our precious ecosystem services.

### Not a message of doom but hope for ASEAN's biodiversity

However, this scenario is not a message of doom and despair, but of encouragement and hope. Southeast Asia has an advantage over other regions. While human and economic development in other parts of the world have often come at the expense of biodiversity, ASEAN's rich biodiversity and ecosystems remain viable and receptive to protection and conservation measures. The theme for the International Conference on Biodiversity — *Biodiversity for Sustainable Bioeconomy* — is both timely and necessary. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization defines bioeconomy as the knowledge-based production and utilisation of biological resources, biological processes and principles to sustainably provide goods and services across all economic sectors. A rich biodiversity and healthy ecosystems mean cleaner air, greater food security, decreased disaster risk, and greater human health outcomes. Clearly, biodiversity — the very foundation of life and livelihoods — supports sustained growth and development for the present and future generations, as long as we recognise our responsibility, not only to care for it, but to utilise it with care.

Economic advancement spearheaded by development sectors such as infrastructure, agriculture and fisheries, mining, energy, and tourism may have negative impacts on biodiversity and our precious ecosystem services but they are the very same sectors that can

significantly contribute to halting, or reversing biodiversity loss. Apart from possessing the human, financial, and technological resources to ensure that their operations do not have negative impacts on ecosystem services, these sectors also have the capacity to augment government efforts in arresting biodiversity loss. This is why it is crucial to mainstream and embed biodiversity conservation into development plans, as well as in the business processes of the private sector, to guarantee that biodiversity is protected and conserved in an ever-growing region such as the ASEAN.

### The ASEAN at the forefront of conservation

Recognising the invaluable contribution of biodiversity to peoples, the ASEAN and its member states have been taking substantial and concerted action at the national, regional, and international levels, towards conservation and sustainable use of our biological resources and natural heritage to drive inclusive sustainable development, where no one is left behind.

The fact that all AMS are parties to various multilateral environmental agreements demonstrates not only their appreciation of the importance of biodiversity conservation, but also their willingness to be legally bound by their commitments under these agreements, which include the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, to name a few.

### The ACB as precursor of regional cooperation

At the regional level, the AMS established the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, or ACB, in 2005 as its response to the challenge of biodiversity loss. Since its establishment, the ACB has been assisting the AMS in promoting regional collaboration in biodiversity conservation, in particular, by supporting concerted efforts to achieve the objectives of the CBD, and ensuring that biodiversity continues to thrive in the region.

All the AMS have their respective national biodiversity conservation programmes. But conservation is a shared responsibility considering that biodiversity loss is an environmental problem that knows no boundaries. To promote cooperation within the ASEAN region, the ACB coordinates the protection and conservation efforts of the AMS into one common front.

### Conserving the ASEAN's best nature parks

One of the region's banner initiatives is the ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHP) Programme, which encourages the AMS to set aside and protect areas that are of high conservation importance. The protection accorded to these nature parks redounds to the valuable ecosystem services they provide. For example, Khao Yai National Park in Thailand is the source of potable water and irrigation in the surrounding areas of the park. The abundance of forest and other biological products in Hoang Lien National Park in Northern Viet Nam gives sustenance and livelihood opportunities to several indigenous communities. The Mount Apo Natural Park in the Philippines provides natural irrigation for food production in surrounding provinces, as well as geothermal energy and hydropower. Moreover, Mount Kinabalu National Park in Sabah, Malaysia is a prime destination for ecotourism enthusiasts, and the Kepulauan Seribu National Park, a marine AHP in Indonesia, provides nutrients to the Java Sea and to the Indian Ocean where the fisheries industry is thriving.

The AHP Programme also offers opportunities to strengthen regional connectivity and cooperation, as ecosystems and their services transcend national borders. Such regional cooperation can be manifested in the collaborative management of adjacent and interconnected protected areas. For instance, a number of countries work together to protect and conserve the biological, ecological, and cultural treasures in environments such as the forests of Borneo, the river systems of the Mekong, and the ocean around the Turtle Islands.

In addition, many AHPs serve as sources of livelihoods to the communities living within and around these areas. As such, the ACB is spearheading the incorporation of biodiversity into the value chain, and ascribing more premium to livelihoods that provide communities with eco-friendly alternatives to unsustainable extraction activities in protected areas. The benefits of these livelihood opportunities are being realised in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam through an ACB project on *Biodiversity-based Products as an Economic Source for the Improvement of Livelihoods and Biodiversity Protection*, supported by the Government of Germany.

### **Bountiful diversity of species and ecosystems**

The ASEAN appreciates its bountiful diversity of species, some of which are migratory, which move across national borders within the region. The AMS exert collective efforts to protect these species, such as elephants, tigers, hornbills, and marine turtles, most of which have culturally significant value, sources of pride and inspiration for the peoples of ASEAN, and subjects of tourism and recreational activities.

Around 50 million waterbirds journey to Southeast Asia to keep themselves warm during the cold winter months in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres. Hence, we have the ASEAN Flyway Network which supports the monitoring and protection of these migratory birds. The continued presence of these birds is a good indicator of a healthy network of wetlands in the region. The protection of the ASEAN's wetlands, which serve as watering grounds of these migratory birds, provides valuable provisioning and ecosystem services that are important, not only to local livelihoods, but also to the food security and ecological integrity of the region. A healthy network of wetlands recharges groundwater for sustained water supply, absorbs flooding and sea level rise, supports fisheries, and keeps bird-borne and water-borne diseases in check. Clearly, conserving this important ecosystem secures sustained benefits for the people, communities, and industries

that depend on these migratory birds and wetlands.

Similarly, healthy ecosystems mean reliable irrigation and water supply for one of the most vital industries in the region: agriculture. As such, the ACB, together with the Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture, has catalysed greater cross-sectoral collaboration to promote agrobiodiversity and biodiversity mainstreaming in the agriculture sector. The importance of cross-sector cooperation, particularly in agriculture, cannot be overemphasised, in light of the increasing need for food security, in order to respond to the region's growing population.

### **Urban areas have biodiversity, too**

Consequent to human development in the ASEAN is the rising demand for housing and shelter, which brings with it the creation of more urban spaces. Seeing this as both a challenge and an opportunity, the AMS and the ACB are promoting urban nature and green infrastructure to ensure that the establishment of urban spaces are cognisant of biodiversity considerations, and that inhabitants of these spaces have access to nature and its associated benefits. Singapore has formulated the Singapore Index on Cities' Biodiversity, a self-assessment tool for measuring a city's biodiversity efforts. Through the index, cities are guided to incorporate biodiversity in urban planning to allow its inhabitants to benefit from nature-based solutions to environmental concerns common in these areas, such as the provision of clean air, the reduction of urban heat, and the prevention of flood water retention, all of which contribute to health and well-being. The Singapore Index is already being utilised, not only in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, but also in countries beyond Southeast Asia.

### **Science and policy interface**

Another important area of cooperation is the promotion of the interface between science and policy. The ACB is working with the AMS to advance knowledge-sharing, capacity building and technology transfer

within the region. Needless to say, science-based and informed decision-making is one of the foundations of crafting sound and sustainable policies for development planning and implementation.

### **Ensuring healthy biodiversity for the next generation**

The ACB is fostering the engagement and leadership of the next generation. Our youth, who represents over 33 per cent of the population, and is a key stakeholder in contributing to a sustainable, healthy, and resilient future. To ensure that our future generation is empowered to inherit and steward our region's rich biodiversity and ecosystems, the ACB is spearheading the ASEAN Youth Programme in collaboration with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network, the official youth constituency to the CBD. This is supported by the European Union, through the *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in the ASEAN* (BCAMP) Project.

Under this programme is the ASEAN Youth Biodiversity Leaders, wherein 20 inspiring youth leaders from all across the region are selected for a year-long fellowship that provides them with in-depth training and mentorship to strengthen youth-led conservation in the region. They also get the opportunity to conduct youth consultations on biodiversity issues, and exchange best practices on enhancing several youth-led activities in the region.

All these efforts are made possible through the strong collaboration and cooperation of the AMS, supported by the ACB and our international and regional partners.

The ASEAN region is the repository of rich biodiversity and ecosystem services, the site of exemplary natural wonders, and home to the ASEAN community. Let us continue working together as one community to conserve and sustainably use our biological diversity; because biodiversity is for people and for progress.

## ASEAN-German Cooperation Project on Economic Development and Biodiversity Protection Concluded in Lao PDR

After four years of implementation, the ASEAN-German Cooperation Project *Biodiversity-based Products (BBP) as an Economic Source for the Improvement of Livelihoods and Biodiversity Protection* celebrated its success in a regional Project Closing Event in the ancient capital of Lao PDR – Luang Prabang – on 4 June 2019.

The BBP Project, funded by the German Government through the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH*, and implemented by the GFA Consulting Group and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), piloted biodiversity-based product development in three ASEAN Member States (AMS) for the improvement of the livelihood of local communities living around protected areas, while at the same time ensuring that the biodiversity is better protected.

Hosted by the Government of Lao PDR, the Project Closing Event brought together the various stakeholders from Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam, who have been a part of the project since its inception phase in 2015. Additionally, guests from other AMS were invited to participate in the discussions based on the stories shared by representatives from government offices, small-scale businesses, and villages from the different pilot sites. The event served as a venue for the officials from the ministries of Environment, Agriculture and Forestry, Trade, Science and Technology; national park management, private sector partners; research and members of the village groups to exchange on further cooperation for the promotion of biodiversity-based products in ASEAN.

The event was opened by Mr. Souksamone Pathammavong, Deputy Director-General of Planning and Cooperation Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Lao PDR.

Ms. Clarissa C. Arida, Director of the Programme Development and Implementation Unit of the ACB, delivered the opening message on behalf of ACB's Executive Director Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim. "Harnessing the potentials and benefits of products from natural

resources through sustainable means is key to achieving the global goal of sustainable development, which encompasses three important dimensions: environmental, economic, and social aspects. In the ASEAN, we acknowledge the vital role and potential of biodiversity for socio-economic development. We also recognise the important role of the private sector and local communities in

conserving biodiversity and enhancing livelihood opportunities for a better quality of life", she said.

"In all these pilot initiatives, a functioning ecosystem is a key to exploring sustainable economic opportunities. Adding value to a product and at the same time maintaining the value of nature is

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From left: Ms. Clarissa Arida, Director of PDI Unit of the ACB, delivered a message on behalf of the ACB Executive Director Dr. Theresa Mundita Lim; Mr. Elpidio Peria, Dr. Dicky Simorangkir, Ms. Bianca Schlegel, and Mr. Christian Elloran during the BBP Project Closing Event



Mr. Thongkan Dethvongsa, Head of the Bamboo Furniture Group in Had Nalaeng Village in Lao PDR delivers a message before the other project beneficiaries.



An exhibition area was set up to showcase the biodiversity-based products from the different pilot sites.

## Biodiversity: Key to Human Health and Food Security

On 22 May each year, Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and various environmental stakeholders celebrate the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB). In line with the IDB2019 theme of *Our Biodiversity, Our Food, Our Health*, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) highlighted the importance of a healthy agricultural biodiversity or agrobiodiversity, as food supply and security essentially relies on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Agrobiodiversity is the result of natural selection processes and the careful selection and inventive developments of farmers, herders, and fishers over millennia. Food and livelihood security depend on the sustained management of biological resources that are important for food and agriculture. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reports that agricultural output has increased over 160 per cent since the 1960s, while the world's population has more than doubled, increasing pressure on biodiversity and agriculture for food production. Biodiversity and ecosystems have degraded due to unsustainable agricultural practices such as monocropping, excessive use

of pesticides and fertilisers, and focus on selected crop varieties, among others. According to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD), in the last 100 years, more than 90 per cent of crop varieties have disappeared from farmers' fields. Half of the breeds of many domestic animals have been lost, and all of the world's 17 main fishing grounds are now being fished at or above their sustainable limits.

The ACB is working with the ASEAN Member States to ensure that agricultural biodiversity is protected and maintained in the ASEAN region. At the regional level, the ASEAN has a Strategic Plan of Action on Cooperation in Food, Agriculture and Forestry, which incorporates policies on agrobiodiversity. The ASEAN also has Regional Guidelines on Food Security and Nutrition Policy covering food security and nutrition, including agrobiodiversity. Among other projects, the ACB works with the governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam to ensure that biodiversity is conserved while producing sustainable agri-products. Implemented in partnership with Germany, the pilot Biodiversity-based

Products Project uses a value chain promotion approach and promotes the use of biodiversity-based products for livelihood and biodiversity conservation. The ACB also participated in the International Conference on Biodiversity 2019 Exposition at the Centara Grand & Bangkok Convention Centre at Central World, Bangkok, Thailand, where Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim, ACB Executive Director, shared how the AMS, with support from the ACB and its development partners, integrate biodiversity conservation in the health sector. The ACB also held an exhibit of biodiversity-based products derived from ASEAN Heritage Parks.

Dr. Lim stressed, "Today, our diet as a whole has less variety. Clearly, we may have a greater quantity of food but we are losing food diversity, which is key to balanced nutrition. As we join the global community in celebrating the International Day for Biological Diversity, let us take the opportunity to promote sustainable agricultural systems to conserve our biodiversity and ensure that we will be able to feed the world, maintain agricultural livelihoods, and enhance human health, thus, ensuring wellness and survival this century and beyond."



## ASEAN continues to enhance effectiveness of protected areas



The establishment of protected areas enhance biodiversity conservation, and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and its partners continue to work with ASEAN Member States to ensure that PAs in the region are sustainably and effectively managed. From 24 to 29 June 2019, the ACB conducted the *Regional Learning Workshop on the Effective Management of Protected Areas in the ASEAN* to enhance the knowledge of the managers and staff of ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs) and other protected areas on different implementation strategies towards sound, scientifically-based, and sustainable environmental management of protected areas. The workshop helped provide an understanding of the elements and principles of ecotourism/tourism and the policies and standards of ecotourism as practiced in selected AHPs and share experiences and lessons learned on recreation, tourism,

and ecotourism; equip participants with awareness and understanding on networking strategies for effective implementation of database management and strategies to promote their parks; and familiarise participants with the ASEAN approach in parks management and understand how multiple stakeholders manage protected areas through participatory processes.

Supported by the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund, the workshop was conducted at Kinabalu National Park and Tunku Abdul Rahman National Park in Sabah, Malaysia. The workshop produced a set of recommendations and networking strategies for effective implementation of protected areas particularly in the areas of database management, information sharing, and communication, education, and public awareness.

## Protect Our Species, Ensure Our Survival

With thousands of species on the brink of extinction, Earth Day 2019 on April 22 focused on the need to arrest the massive and ongoing loss of wildlife all over the world. Current rates of extinction are 100 to 1,000 times that of the natural rate of loss. The World Wide Fund for Nature's 2014 Living Planet Report found that wildlife populations of vertebrate species—mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and fish—have declined by 52 per cent over the last 40 years. The ASEAN Biodiversity Outlook 2, a publication of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), reported that threatened forest species constitute 16 per cent of 14,591 species assessed by the World Conservation Union in the ASEAN region from 1996 to 2015. More plants are threatened compared to animals. Mammals

and birds constitute 84 per cent of all threatened wildlife as these groups are the most affected by deforestation.

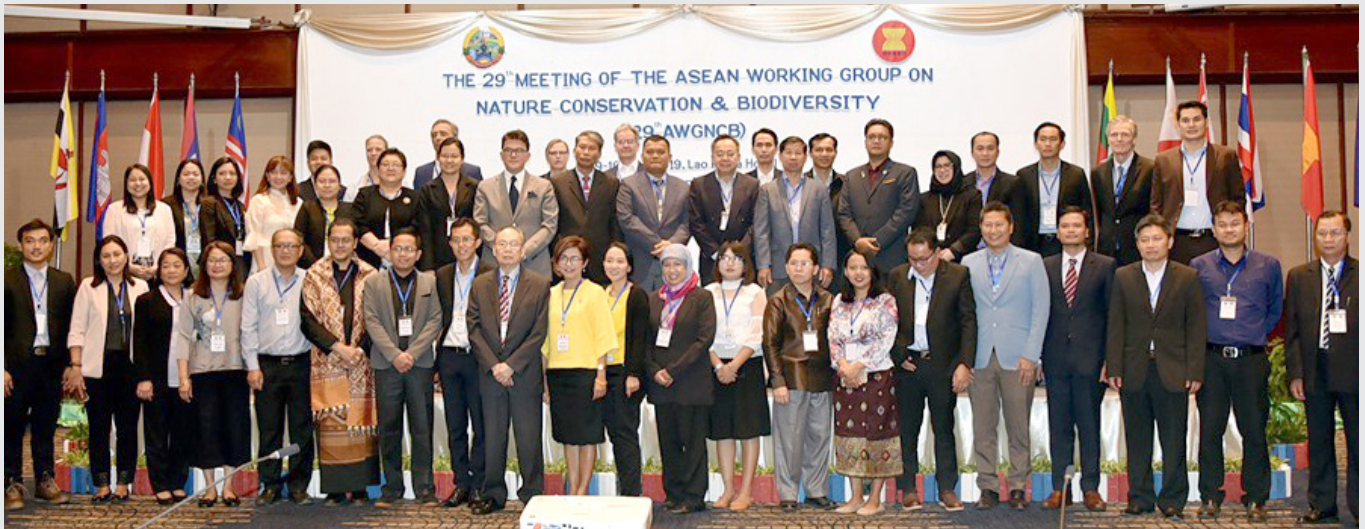
Poaching and the illegal wildlife trade are among the most serious threats to species. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime ranks illegal trade of timber-based products from and within the ASEAN region as the second biggest criminal activity, next to the illegal trade of counterfeit goods. The most illegally traded wildlife in the ASEAN range from mammals to fish, orchids to exotic birds, and corals to reptiles.

To reduce the rate of species extinction, the ASEAN Member States (AMS), supported by the ACB, are implementing a variety of initiatives. These include *in situ*

## Biodiversity mainstreaming makes good business sense

At an environment forum organised by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim stated that enterprises should start mainstreaming biodiversity into their operations rather than just make it a part of their corporate social responsibility activities. She stressed that the Philippines has one of the most biodiverse environments in the world, and the richness and uniqueness of its ecosystem needs to be protected because it is key to the survival and growth of businesses and industries.

Mainstreaming biodiversity requires embedding biodiversity considerations into the policy, strategy, and practice of businesses so that biodiversity is conserved and sustainably used. Dr. Lim said that, "Practicing environmental conservation and biodiversity mainstreaming makes good business sense because nature provides business with the fundamental components for long-term profit and survival." Many industries, including fisheries, agriculture, and ecotourism, among others, directly rely on biodiversity sustenance. The protection of the country's biodiversity-rich areas, including its forests, protected areas, and marine areas, is thus critical to the country's sustainable development. *Daily Tribune*



### ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity convenes to discuss ongoing nature projects

The ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity (AWGNCB) was established to intensify cooperation in addressing problems associated with conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and undertake concrete actions in ensuring that the region's rich biological diversity is protected, conserved, and sustainably managed. The AWGNCB also helps monitor and develop a common ASEAN stand, where applicable, to international and regional conventions and agreements related to nature conservation and biodiversity. The ASEAN Centre for

Biodiversity participated in the 29<sup>th</sup> meeting of the AWGNCB on from 9 to 10 May 2019 in Vientiane, Lao PDR to share updates on biodiversity conservation programmes, projects, and activities in the ASEAN region. Attended by representatives of the ASEAN Member States, ASEAN Secretariat, and ASEAN development partners, the AWGNCB meeting served as a venue for identifying and prioritising actions to towards the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets by 2020 and beyond.



### ACB participates in ASEAN Working Group on Environmental Education (AWGEE) meeting

To discuss ways forward in boosting environmental education and public participation towards sustainable development in the ASEAN region, the 11<sup>th</sup> AWGEE Meeting convened delegates from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, and the ASEAN Secretariat for a two-day meeting from 25 to 26 June 2019 in Bandar Seri Begawan. Attending the open session of the meeting were representatives from the Hanns Seidel Foundation, and the Ministry of Environment of Japan.





## Month of the Ocean celebrations launched in Boracay

Free the sea from marine debris! That's the battle cry of hundreds of conservationists who converged on the island of Boracay to launch Month of the Ocean celebrations in May in the Philippines.

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity joined the Biodiversity Management Bureau and environmentalists from the government and other partner organisations to celebrate Boracay's rehabilitation and participate in an underwater clean up to emphasise the importance of sustainable tourism. The event included a beach clean up, exhibits, and a concert to bring greater attention to the need to reduce plastic pollution and marine debris, and strengthen marine and coastal ecosystems conservation.



## Preparations underway for Sixth ASEAN Heritage Parks Conference

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity and its partners will convene the Sixth ASEAN Heritage Parks Conference from 21 to 24 October 2019 in Lao PDR. The event coincides with the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the AHP declaration.



## ACB conducts Workshop on Biodiversity Data Organisation and Management

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, through its Biodiversity Information Management Unit, conducted a regional Workshop on Biodiversity Data Organisation and Management. The six-day training course was conducted through lectures, demos, and hands-on exercises. It covered topics on the value of properly archiving species and protected areas information, including the need for data interoperability, understanding the Darwin Core (DwC) concepts, data fields and database structure, the IUCN PA categories, orientation on the protected area database, and mapping. The participants had hands-on training on the use and manipulation of their actual data to produce trends and graphs that may be useful in protected area monitoring, management plan updating, and other purposes.





### The ACB starts second phase of Institutional Strengthening of Biodiversity Sector in ASEAN Project

From 2015 to 2019, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) implemented the Institutional Strengthening of Biodiversity Sector in ASEAN (ISB) under the Development Cooperation Programme Protection of Biological Diversity in the ASEAN Member States (CARE4BioDiv), which was funded by the Federal Government of Germany. The second phase of the project (ISB II) commenced in March 2019 with the following recommended areas of interventions: (a) organisational



development; (b) ASEAN Heritage Parks Programme; (c) facilitation of joint ASEAN positions on the Convention on Biological Diversity and related international processes; and (d) mainstreaming biodiversity. The ACB and *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) are currently working on the draft work plan, which will then be improved and approved by the ASEAN Member States.



### Blooming *Rafflesia* attracts visitors to Philippine ASEAN Heritage Park

Each year, the *Rafflesia panchoana*, locally called “Malaboo”, blooms and attracts countless visitors to Mount Makiling Forest Reserve (MMFR), one of the ASEAN Heritage Parks of the Philippines. As Secretariat to the AHP Programme, officers and staff of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity hiked to Station 14 of the MMFR to see the *Rafflesia* up close, and raise awareness of the rich biodiversity found in the nation’s protected areas and AHPs. The elusive plant species lasts for only 5–6 days in full bloom, making it a tourist attraction in MMFR. It has no stems, roots, and leaves and acts as a parasite that lives through a vine called *Tetrastigma*. *Rafflesia* is also known for its foul smell, similar to that of rotten flesh. That’s why it is also known as “the corpse flower.” Its unique scent attracts flies, which act as its pollinators.

### ACB recognises support of Ambassador Elizabeth P. Buensuceso

Her Excellency Elizabeth P. Buensuceso, former Permanent Representative of the Philippines to ASEAN, receives a Plaque of Recognition from the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) during her visit to the ACB Headquarters on 13 June 2019. Ambassador Buensuceso, who started to serve as the head of the Philippine mission to ASEAN in 2013, has shown unwavering support for the Centre’s mandate of facilitating coordination and cooperation among the ASEAN Member States, development partners, and various sectors towards the conservation and the sustainable use of the region’s biodiversity. One of her notable contributions to the ACB was being one of the proponents of the ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes Programme, a recognition scheme for outstanding individuals from the ASEAN region who have contributed significantly to biodiversity conservation and advocacy efforts in their respective countries and in the region.



## ASEAN-German Cooperation Project ...continued from page 4

crucial to enhancing competitiveness from farm to markets. The ACB joins hands with GIZ and GFA in recognising the milestones of the BBP project at the conclusion of this cooperation project”, Executive Director Lim also stated in her message.

Opening messages were also delivered by Mr. Khamlay Sipaseuth, Director of Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office Luang Namtha, Lao PDR, and by Dr. Dicky Simorangkir Programme Director of GIZ. The latter also gave a presentation on the overview of the GIZ programme, including the BBP component.

For the invited participants who were new to the BBP Project, Ms. Bianca Schlegel, Project Manager from GFA Consulting Group, provided a brief introduction to what biodiversity-based products are, and on value chains.

Value chain experiences and lessons learned on developing the black ginger, vine, bamboo, *bo khai, giao co lam*, honey, and medicinal bath herbs product value chains were presented by Ms. Bopreang Ken, Deputy Director, Department of Biodiversity General Secretarial for the National Council for Sustainable Development, Ministry of Environment, Cambodia; Mr. Oukeo Xayatham, Deputy Head of the Nam Ha National Protected Area, Lao PDR; Mr. Pham Van Nam, Vice Director of Ba Be National Park, Viet Nam; Mr. Tam Thanh Nguyen, Deputy Head Financial Planning, Hoang Lien National Park, Viet Nam; and Mr. Nguyen Van Hieu, Director of Geoinformatics Research Center Thai Nguyen University of Agriculture and Forestry Viet Nam.

Mr. Christian Elloran, Database Specialist from the Biodiversity Information Management Unit of the ACB gave an overview of the BBP Project’s web platform and its contents, and shared

its use to the AMS. On the other hand, Mr. Elpidio Peria, Programme Specialist from the Programme Development and Implementation Unit of the ACB provided a presentation entitled, *The Mainstreaming of Biodiversity across Sectors through Promotion of Biodiversity Value Chains*. Here, he gave the different ways on how mainstreaming of biodiversity-based products into policy can be achieved, and how the ACB support the AMS in these actions.

Other highlights of the Project Closing Event Included an exhibition area where the BBP Project stakeholders were able to showcase and sell their products, and the launch of the BBP Project Video, which featured the stories of villagers from all the pilot sites in the three AMS, as well as messages from officials from the relevant government organisations.

## ASEAN leaders support theme of advancing partnership for sustainability

Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha assured the public that the leaders of the ASEAN Member States (AMS) have lent full support for Thailand’s ASEAN chairmanship’s theme of *Advancing Partnership for Sustainability* raised during the 34<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Bangkok, Thailand. Leaders of the AMS met with representatives of various regional stakeholders, including the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, ASEAN Youth and ASEAN Business Advisory Council, among others, and agreed to sustained efforts for the “ASEAN family to move forward together to create a people-centered community that leaves no one behind and looks to the future.”

The ASEAN Leaders’ Vision Statement on Partnership for Sustainability reflects efforts to enhance sustainable security, promote seamless ASEAN connectivity, and pursue sustainable development to increase ASEAN’s strategic value and bring about regional stability and prosperity. The AMS have agreed to focus on the issue of marine debris, which has a widespread impact on the well-being, health and hygiene

of people, marine animals and natural resources, leading to the adoption of the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in ASEAN Region. The ASEAN leaders have also agreed to support innovation and ideas, build capacity in research and the application of scientific knowledge; launch the Satellite Warehouse under the Disaster Emergency Logistics System for ASEAN and ASEAN Center of Military Medicine to efficiently cope with emergencies

and natural disasters; and establish a Network of ASEAN Associations to promote a people-centered and inclusive ASEAN community.

These and other efforts in enhancing sustainability will enable ASEAN to respond to changes and challenges such as the fourth industrial revolution, climate change, and competition between countries outside the region. *Xinhua.net*

## ASEAN meets the challenge of air pollution

On World Environment Day on 5 June, Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim, Executive Director of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), said the 2019 theme, *Beat Air Pollution*, is very relevant to the people of ASEAN, now more than ever. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that indoor air pollution in the ASEAN region has caused more than 376,000 premature deaths, while outdoor air pollution contributed to more than 149,000 premature deaths annually.

The ACB continues to support ASEAN Member States in initiatives to protect the region's biodiversity and ecosystems from pollution and other drivers of biodiversity loss. These include the ASEAN Heritage

Parks Programme, which promotes conservation of biodiversity-rich protected areas through effective management, including preventing all forms of pollution; the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution to reduce greenhouse emissions from peatland fires; and adoption of the biophilic approach to greener and more sustainable cities. Dr. Lim further recommended that industries use technologies to reduce the release of air pollutants from their operations and spearhead tree planting activities to help absorb carbon, and reduce air-borne and respiratory problems in nearby communities. The public can help reduce air pollution by taking public or fossil-free modes of transport and by

reducing and segregating waste.

Dr. Lim stated that "World Environment Day is not the only chance to demonstrate that if human activities are the cause of pollution, humans can also be the solution. Let us make each day of the year an opportunity to practice green lifestyles and behaviour. Let us all promote green living by decreasing our carbon prints, using environment-friendly products, clean technology, and renewable energy to help ensure an environment with healthy biodiversity and ecosystems that will contribute to sustainable development and human development and survival."



## Philippines conducts Philippine ASEAN Heritage Parks Meeting and Workshop

Out of more than 1,300 protected areas in the ASEAN region, 44 have been declared as ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHP) through the AHP Programme. Nine of these AHPs are in the Philippines, namely, Mts. Iglit-Baco National Park, Mt. Apo Natural Park, Mt. Kitanglad Range Natural Park, Mt. Malindang Range Natural Park, Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park, Mt. Hamiguitan Range Wildlife Sanctuary, Mts. Timpoong-Hibok-Hibok Natural Monument, Mt. Makiling Forest Reserve, and Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary. In preparation for the Sixth AHP Conference in October 2019 in Lao PDR, the Biodiversity Management Bureau, in coordination with the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, held the Fifth Meeting cum Workshop of the National AHP Managers from 18 to 20 June 2019 in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan.

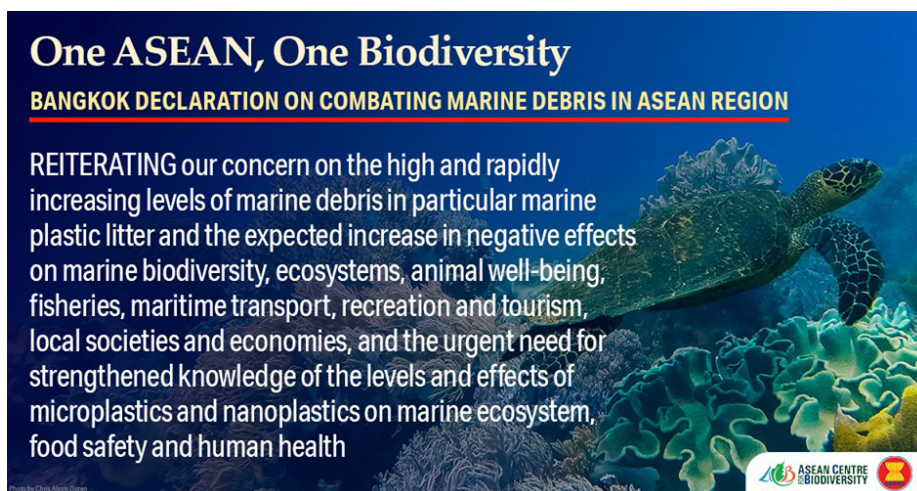
The results of the meeting will contribute to the State of Protected Area Report of the Philippines. The workshop was supported by the European Union through the Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP) Project. Other protected areas in the Philippines were invited to share their experiences and challenges in protected area management, including Mt. Mantalingahan Protected Landscape, Pasonanca National Park, and Mts. Banahaw-San Cristobal Protected Landscape. Highlights of the workshop include the following: (1) sharing of experiences on sustainable financing and livelihood; (2) national stock-taking report on biodiversity/ecosystem services assessment and applied economic analysis for improved management,

policy development, and innovative financing; (3) discussion on the AHP Regional Action Plan; and (4) identification of further actions for AHP management.



## ACB lauds adoption of the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris

Noting the richness of the ASEAN's marine biodiversity and the danger posed by plastics and other marine debris, the leaders of the ASEAN Member States (AMS) adopted the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris at the 34<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit in Thailand. With the declaration, ASEAN leaders commit to strengthen actions among AMS and partners to prevent and significantly reduce marine debris; encourage an integrated land-to-sea approach to prevent and reduce marine debris, and strengthen national laws and regulations to enhance regional and international cooperation; promote coordination between ASEAN sectoral bodies to effectively address the multi-dimensional and far-reaching negative effects and sources of marine debris pollution; enhance multi-stakeholder coordination and cooperation to combat marine debris, promote private sector engagement and investment in preventing and reducing marine debris; promote innovative solutions, capacity building, and exchange of best practices to enhance plastics value chains and improve resource efficiency; strengthen research capacity and application of scientific knowledge to support science-based policy and decision making; and accelerate advocacy and actions to increase public awareness, participation, and education to promote behavioral change.



The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) welcomed the adoption of the Bangkok Declaration given the increasing danger of marine pollution. According to ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim, "Marine pollution is a transboundary issue and its impact on marine biodiversity is already evident with the plastics being ingested by migratory marine species that travel across seas in the ASEAN and adjacent areas. The Declaration substantially contributes towards Aichi Biodiversity Target 8, on bringing pollution to levels that are not detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity, and Strategic Goal C, on improving the status of biodiversity by

safeguarding ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity. It requires regional efforts to combat marine debris, and considering that our rich marine diversity in the Region contributes to food security, climate change mitigation, and increased disaster resiliency for the people of ASEAN."

Dr. Lim stressed that the Declaration provides more impetus and the guidance for the ACB and development partners to strengthen efforts to support the AMS to help ensure that this sincere resolve is reflected in cross-sectoral policies, and operationalised and realised on the ground.

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