



Protection of migratory species key to thriving regional ecosystems

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) highlights the importance of transboundary cooperation among ASEAN Member States in protecting wildlife and migratory species and their habitats in the region.

“Species know no national boundaries and so the responsibility of protecting them is not borne by one country alone. This makes sub-regional cooperation paramount,” the ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said.

Lim spoke about ASEAN’s joint efforts in reducing threats to biodiversity at a recent plenary session of the 8th Annual Conference on Environmental Science held at Mindanao State University on its Tawi-Tawi campus in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Philippines, from 19 to 21 September 2019.

She cited the collaboration between the Malaysian and the Philippine governments to protect the population of marine turtles moving across their boundaries. This was formalised by the bilateral agreement to establish

the first transboundary protected area in the region, the Turtle Islands Heritage Protected Area, which aims to ban the collection of turtle eggs and introduce alternative livelihood projects to involved communities.

Another important project in the region, she noted, is the ASEAN Flyway Network, which aims to conserve migratory water birds and their habitats in the coastal and inland wetlands along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF).

The first phase of the project began in 2018, with support from Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) and the Singaporean government as the country lead. The project facilitated networking and collaboration among countries through the annual meeting of the ASEAN Flyway Network. National planning workshops were also conducted to identify priorities and challenges.

The ASEAN region lies at the heart of the EAAF, one of the major flyways in the world, which supports the annual migration of 50 million water birds.

...continued on page 4

What's Inside?



India, ASEAN exchange best practices in applying City Biodiversity Index
page 3



ASEAN-Japan cooperation work with officials to boost promotion of ASEAN Heritage Parks
page 6

ASEAN Member States join negotiations on global agreement to safeguard all life on Earth

ASEAN Member States (AMS) and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), representatives from State Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), experts, indigenous peoples and communities, and stakeholders from around the world, opened talks on a global agreement to safeguard life on earth in all its forms. Held from 27 to 30 August 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya, this was the first meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. One hundred ninety-six countries were represented in the meeting.

State Parties to the CBD are expected to adopt the post-2020 global biodiversity framework during their 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15), scheduled for October 2020 in Kunming, China. The new framework represents the world's plan to halt the alarming trends in the state of nature.

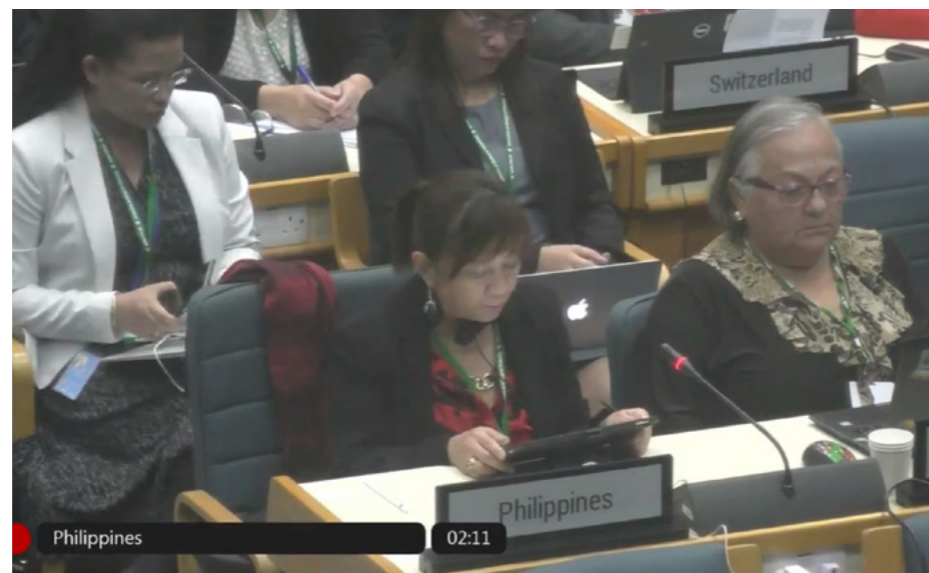
According to the Global Assessment on Biodiversity by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), 75 per cent of the earth's land surface has been significantly altered, 66 per cent of the ocean area is experiencing increasing cumulative impacts, and over 85 per cent of wetlands (area) has been lost. Anthropogenic interventions threaten more species with global extinction now more than ever before. Around one million species face extinction unless action to reduce biodiversity loss is taken.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Climate Change and Land shows the adverse effects of climate change, among them, the degradation of the world's key biodiversity areas. If temperatures rise by 2°C above pre-industrial levels, one-third of these areas will

be affected. At 4.5°C, two-thirds of these rich biodiversity areas will experience the impact.

Meanwhile, the 2019 World Economic Forum Global Risks Report notes that environmental issues like extreme weather events, failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation, natural and human-induced disasters, and biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse are among the world's top 10 risks with the greatest impact and likelihood to happen.

The post-2020 global biodiversity framework will respond to these ecological concerns. In this new framework, State Parties aim to build on the CBD's current Strategic Plan on Biodiversity (2011–2020), which was adopted in 2010. The framework is expected to facilitate transformative change by taking a holistic approach to the multiple crises facing the planet and all its inhabitants, and leveraging opportunities to invest in biodiversity. Through nature-centred development pathways, the framework will set the course to achieving the CBD's vision of Living in Harmony with Nature by 2050.



The Nairobi negotiations drew on extensive consultations that took place around the globe during 2019. In the ASEAN, the ACB had convened consultation meetings among the AMS and key partners in the region to craft the ASEAN's contribution to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The first meeting was held on 24 April 2019 in Manila, Philippines; the second was held on 8 May 2019 in Vientiane, Lao PDR. The ACB synthesised all AMS' inputs and submitted these to the CBD.

In their inputs to the post-2020 framework, the AMS identified mainstreaming, resource mobilisation, communication, and integrating diverse perspectives as four action areas to achieve the vision for 2050. The AMS also recognised the need for (1) transboundary cooperation among countries to address key biodiversity issues, (2) strengthening linkages among ASEAN pillars such that cross-sectors should be part of action plans, allowing different sectors to be engaged in one another's activities, and (3) transformation of mindset to see the AMS as one community working together to increase investment in biodiversity protection, conservation, and wise use.

...continued on page 3

India, ASEAN exchange best practices in applying City Biodiversity Index

Representatives from India and ASEAN shared experiences and best practices in applying the City Biodiversity Index to promote biodiversity in their respective cities in a workshop in Singapore.

Also referred to as the Singapore Index on Cities' Biodiversity, the City Biodiversity Index is a self-assessment tool for cities to evaluate and monitor the progress of their biodiversity conservation efforts against their respective baselines.



The index gives scores to cities based on 23 indicators, which gauge native biodiversity, ecosystem services provided by biodiversity, and the governance and management of biodiversity.

"This activity is timely, with the recognition of the need for nature-based solutions to deal with the impacts of climate change", said Leong Chee Chiew, deputy chief executive officer of the National Parks Board of Singapore or NParks at the opening of the workshop held from 24 to 26 September 2019.

NParks hosted the workshop in partnership with the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) of India.

The workshop called *ACB-NBA Cooperation: Capacity-Building Towards Implementing the Nagoya*

Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing, the City Biodiversity Index and the Strategic Plan on Biodiversity is part of a series of capacity-enhancing activities under the auspices of the ASEAN-India Cooperation and financed by the ASEAN-India Green Fund.

Newly-appointed chairperson of India's National Biodiversity Authority Vinod Bahari Mathur attended the workshop and welcomed the participants from nine ASEAN Member States and seven cities in India.

In a speech, Mathur praised Singapore's efforts to establish green spaces saying "what Singapore has done is something the world should see and learn from."

According to studies presented during the workshop, cities with a large amount of tree cover are

usually 3°C cooler than cities that don't have many trees. Likewise, city residents exposed to greenery are generally healthier and have a calmer disposition to deal with day-to-day challenges.

The effort to develop the City Biodiversity Index was a collaboration of Singapore's NParks, the United Nations (UN), and an international UN task force of experts on cities and biodiversity. It was adopted at the 10th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan, in 2010.

Around 30 countries all over the world have already applied the City Biodiversity Index, Lena Chan, senior director for International Biodiversity Cooperation of NParks, said.

ASEAN Member States join negotiations on global agreement to safeguard all life on Earth

...continued from page 2

"As we work towards living in harmony with nature in 2050, mainstreaming of biodiversity is essential," ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said. "Biodiversity is where we get our food, ingredients for medicine, materials for our clothing and shelter, and raw materials for businesses and industries.

Biodiversity is interconnected with all development sectors."

The ACB is working to mainstream biodiversity in the key development sectors of agriculture, fisheries, health, tourism, manufacturing and processing, education, and climate change.

Palawan hosts ASEAN meeting on culture and information



ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim shared how the AMS work together for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.



ASEAN-COCI delegates visited popular sites in Puerto Princesa that showcase the biodiversity of the area and the culture of the locals.

The ASEAN Committee for Culture and Information's (ASEAN-COCI) held its 54th meeting in Puerto Princesa, Palawan, Philippines from 19 to 23 August 2019 to deliberate on project proposals for 2020. The ASEAN-COCI promotes effective cooperation in culture and information to enhance mutual understanding and solidarity among ASEAN Member States (AMS). The meeting opened with cultural performances, including a Babaylan ritual and chant by the Palawan State University Sining Dance Troupe, and a rendition of *Malayo Man, Malapit Din* (Even Though We Are Far, We Are Still Close to Each Other) by

Bayang Barrios at Ang Naliyagan. An ASEAN Awareness Forum was also conducted to highlight the history, biodiversity richness, socio-cultural linkages, and tourism opportunities of the region.

As part of celebrations marking 2019 as the ASEAN Cultural Year and recognising the links between biodiversity and culture, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) supports the ASEAN-COCI in its vision to promote cultural cooperation in the ASEAN. At the ASEAN Awareness Forum, ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim shared how the AMS work

together to conserve and sustainably use the region's marine biodiversity and how the youth can help protect these abundant resources in their own ways. The ACB also facilitated the Biodiversity and Culture Tour of the ASEAN-COCI delegates. The participants learned about crocodile protection and conservation at the Palawan Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Center; admired the Palawan landscape and seascape at Baker's Hill; tried traditional weaving at Binuatan Creations and Weaving Center and Rurungan sa Tubod Foundation.

Protection of migratory species...

continued from page 1

Among the birds flying this route is critically endangered spoon-billed sandpiper (*Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*), which breeds in north-eastern Russia and winters in Southeast Asia.

As a result of the destruction and degradation of wetlands in which it resides, its global population has been rapidly declining. The number of spoon-billed sandpiper is estimated between 240 and 456 individuals based on recent counts from the International Waterbird Census.

ASEAN Biodiversity Outlook 2, citing findings by the Biodiversity and Nature Conservation Association, reported that Nan Thar Island in Rakhine State and Gulf of Martaban in Myanmar, both along the 8,000-kilometre EAAF, are critical wintering grounds for the species.

Lim said the network of coastal and inland wetlands along this flyway is an interconnected system crucial for the survival of migratory water birds.

"Cooperation in the ASEAN is the most effective approach to conserving and protecting these migratory flyways," Lim said.

The ACB also showcased the milestones and achievements of the ASEAN Heritage Parks Programme

in an exhibit during the three-day conference.

Organised by the Philippine Environmental Science Association (PESA), the conference gathered experts, government officials, students, and members of the academe and the private sector for research updates and discussions on key environmental agenda. PESA is a consortium of higher education institutions in the Philippines.



ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim speaks before the participants of the 8th Annual Conference on Environmental Science at the Mindanao State University

Youth from ASEAN Plus Three countries tackle marine litter solutions

Organised by Thailand's Department of Environmental Quality, the ASEAN Plus Three Youth Environment Forum (AYEF) 2019 was held from 8 to 13 September 2019 in Phuket, Thailand. The forum, which carried the theme *Clean Up Our Sea, Change Our Future*, was designed to raise awareness on the issue of marine debris and to encourage the youth of the ASEAN Member States, and those from China, Japan, and Korea to protect the environment and help beat plastic pollution.

Permanent Secretary of Thailand's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Wijarn Simachaya officially welcomed the participants to the event. During his message, he highlighted how everyone's contribution is important in the fight against plastic pollution. "Our individual efforts may seem small, but if a large number of people unite for a common cause, our actions will be a major stake for our environment," he said. He likewise shared Thailand's efforts in beating

plastic pollution and encouraged the young people of ASEAN Plus Three countries to be proactive citizens for the environment in their own simple ways.

"You may be a citizen of Thailand, Cambodia, [the] Philippines, Singapore, Korea, Malaysia, or any other country, but you also belong to one Earth. We have to beat plastic pollution, and we have to act now." This is according to Assistant Professor Prinya Thaewanarumitkul of the Thammasat University, who served as one of the guest speakers. In his presentation, he shared his experiences in curbing plastic pollution by visiting 10 provinces of Thailand by boat, just to collect wastes.

One of the sessions of AYEF 2019 highlighted the work of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) for the natural treasures of the region, as well as one of its programmes, the ASEAN Youth Biodiversity Programme (AYBP) under the ACB-

EU *Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Area Management in the ASEAN* (BCAMP) Project. Mary Kristerie Baleva, External Relations and Policy Specialist, showcased the richness of the ASEAN region's marine biodiversity and the regional efforts to curb the threats to these natural wealth, such as overexploitation and marine debris. She highlighted the ACB's campaign called, *Oceans are fitter without our litter*, a call to beat plastic pollution, in support to the Bangkok Declaration Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN region.

Mika Tan, Coordinator of AYBP explained how the programme empowers the youth of ASEAN to contribute to the formulation and implementation of biodiversity policies. She shared a few of the activities that youth leaders involved in the programme are collaborating, such as the production of documentaries and youth internships.



Youth from the ASEAN Plus Three countries gathered in Phuket, Thailand from 8 to 13 September 2019 to participate in various activities aimed to raise awareness on the issue of marine debris

ASEAN-Japan cooperation work with officials to boost promotion of ASEAN Heritage Parks



Representatives from the various ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHP) all over the region convened in Hanoi, Viet Nam for the Regional Workshop on Communication, Education, and Public Awareness for the AHP Programme

In line with the 35th founding anniversary of the ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHP) Programme, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), supported by the Government of Japan through the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF), held the *Regional Workshop on Communication, Education, and Public Awareness (CEPA) for the AHP Programme* from 25 to 27 September 2019 in Hanoi, Viet Nam.

The regional workshop, implemented in cooperation with the Biodiversity Conservation Agency (BCA), Vietnam Environment Administration of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, convened officials and representatives from the AHPs and the ASEAN Member States in Hanoi, and assisted the workshop participants in developing communication strategies to

promote the AHPs as models of protected area management by reviewing the AHP Branding Guidelines, and crafting AHP CEPA plans that will feed into the Regional CEPA Plan.

Pham Anh Cuong, National Focal Point, ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity, and director of the BCA, opened the Workshop. “We highly appreciate ACB for holding this workshop to enhance Communication, Education, and Public Awareness or CEPA for the ASEAN Heritage Parks Programme and discuss to draft programmes on communication, education to be implemented at AHP”, he said.

“Through this workshop, we plan to further elevate the stature of the AHP Programme as a strong brand through communication

campaigns, production and distribution of CEPA materials, and conduct of promotional activities. We will promote the AHPs as models of effective protected area management.”, according to Mary Kristerie Baleva, External Relations and Policy Specialist, and acting Head of the Communication and Public Affairs Unit of the ACB during her message to welcome the participants to the first day of the workshop.

She further emphasised, “More than anybody else, you, the park managers and staff, know your ASEAN Heritage Parks. You love your AHPs, and you protect what you love.”

To provide guidance to the participants in creating their CEPA plans for their respective AHPs, resource persons from international

organisations were invited to the event. Eisen Bernard Bernardo, Senior Regional Communication Specialist from the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security-Southeast Asia, discussed how to create a strong brand for the AHPs. Aside from highlighting to the participants that the main task is to create a distinct and memorable brand identity for the AHPs, he highlighted the biodiversity conservation as the main objective of AHPs. “While we are crafting the AHP Branding Guidelines and the AHP CEPA Plan, we have to be reminded of why the AHPs exist in the first place — to serve as models of biodiversity conservation. Hence, while we would like to boost the promotion of our AHPs, we have to make sure that the CEPA materials and activities that we are producing and implementing do not harm our precious biodiversity.”

With guidance from the ACB representatives, the participants worked in groups to come up with CEPA plans for each AMS, including the target audience, key messages to focus on, and taglines. These were then presented in plenary, and feedback were given by the resource speakers.

At the end of the second day, Tran Ngoc Cuong from the BCA, expressed his gratitude to the ACB and the participants, as the workshop served as a venue for sharing of knowledge and experience of the AMS.

To cap off the regional workshop, the participants and the resource speakers were toured at the Van Long Nature Reserve, a 2,736-hectare protected area located in the city of Ninh Binh, in northern Viet Nam. A wetland surrounded by limestone pinnacles, the nature reserve covers multiple caves, and is home to numerous bird species. Apart from being a favorite area for birdwatchers, the Van Long

Nature Reserve is one of the last few places where the critically-endangered Delacour’s Langur can be found.

Considered a flagship programme of the ASEAN, the AHP Programme generates greater awareness, pride, appreciation, enjoyment, and conservation of the region’s rich natural heritage. The ACB serves as the Secretariat of the AHP Programme.

The regional workshop is part of the JAIF-supported project, *Improving Management Effectiveness of the ASEAN Heritage Parks through Capacity Development and Biodiversity Information*.



The workshop participants at the Van Long Nature Reserve in Viet Nam



Mary Kristerie Baleva, External Relations and Policy Specialist and Acting Head of Communication and Public Affairs of the ACB



Pham Anh Cuong, National Focal Point, ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity, and director of the BCA



Officials from the Biodiversity-based Economy Development Office (BEDO) of Thailand met with officials and representatives from the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) to exchange ideas concerning objectives that are common between the two organisations, such as promoting biodiversity-based livelihoods through sustainable use of natural resources.

On 28 July 2019, the officials from BEDO visited three different enterprises in the province of Laguna, Philippines to study community products based on biodiversity and traditional knowledge. The owners of each of the three enterprises visited – Lety's Buko Pie, Laguna Water Hyacinth Handicraft Producers Association, Inc., and Patis Tesoro Boutique – discussed the background of their work and the process of how their products are made.

The following day, the guests from BEDO arrived at the ACB Headquarters where they met with ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim, Director of Programme Development and Implementation Unit Clarissa Arida, Programme Specialist Elpidio Peria, and other representatives from the ACB to discuss possible areas of cooperation.



Seventy participants from the ASEAN Member States (AMS), particularly from research and training institutions, protected area management, biodiversity management agencies, and planning agencies gathered in Hanoi, Viet Nam from 16 to 18 September for the regional orientation workshop, *Biodiversity/Ecosystem Services Assessment and Economic Analysis for Management, Policy and Innovative Financing Applications (BESA++): Knowledge, Uses, Gaps, and Priorities for BCAMP Pilot ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs) and Protected Areas*.



The participants presented and discussed the results of country and site stocktaking on ecosystem services assessment and economic analysis, and the evaluation of BESA skills and training needs on BESA++ in the region.

The workshop was facilitated by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) in recognition of ASEAN's rich terrestrial and marine biodiversity, the need to sustain ecosystem functions and services, and the need to respond to current challenges such as climate change, rapid urbanisation, and continuing habitat loss from agricultural expansion, industrial development, and wildlife trafficking.

At the end of the workshop, at least two proposals were presented for action research on the pilot ASEAN Heritage Parks prioritised during the past country workshops.



In line with the theme of this year's International Day of Biological Diversity, *Our Biodiversity, Our Food, Our Health*, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) teamed up with FoodPrints, Metro Channel's food and travel television show, to feature the distinct culinary delights, the unique culture, and the rich biodiversity of Myanmar.

FoodPrints' host, celebrity chef, restaurateur, author, columnist food critic, and food blogger from the Philippines, Chef Sandy Daza, along with the show's production team and representatives of the ACB, visited



popular restaurants and food stalls in Myanmar to showcase some of the country's signature dishes, and the methods of preparing these.

One of the places visited was the Inlay Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, one of Myanmar's ASEAN Heritage Parks. Apart from documenting the wide range of endemic plant and animal species, the team witnessed the traditional livelihood methods of the people in the area, such as raising fruits and vegetables in floating gardens, and the sustainable fishing practices.



On 19 August 2019, Senator Cynthia Villar visited the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) headquarters to meet with ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim, and discuss the links between agriculture and biodiversity. They were joined by former Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture Director Gil Saguiguit, University of the Philippines Los Baños Chancellor Fernando Sanchez, Jr., and ACB Biodiversity Information Management Director Sheila Vergara.

The ACB will be working with Senator Villar's office to identify areas in the Philippines where the link between biodiversity and agriculture can easily be demonstrated.

The ACB is hopeful for this future collaboration, which is in line with its goal to mainstream biodiversity in key sectors, including agriculture. The Centre envisions sustainable agriculture in the ASEAN, taking into account biodiversity and the environment.



Youth leaders from 85 countries around the globe gathered at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Man and Biosphere (MAB) Youth Forum from 14 to 19 September 2019 at the Changbaishan Biosphere Reserve, China. Participants were mostly youth living in biosphere reserves.

ASEAN Youth Biodiversity Programme (AYBP) Coordinator Mika Mei Jia Tan from the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity was one of the group facilitators while the participants formulated a youth action plan. Along with her is Youth Biodiversity Leader (YBL) Karl Jun Quiang Png, who also facilitated one of the groups. The YBL programme is one of the components of the AYBP.

At the end of the forum, youth representatives read their declaration based on the action plans they discussed in their groups.



To expand and further strengthen the global wildlife trade regime, the 18th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was held in Geneva, Switzerland from 17 to 28 August 2019. Clarissa C. Arida, Director of the Programme



Development and Implementation Unit of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity served as one of the panelists of a side event organised by the Republic of Indonesia called *Curbing Illegal Wildlife Trade and Strengthening Legal Market System*.



With the theme *One Region, One ASEAN: Partners for Sustainable Development* and hosted by the Philippines' Department of Tourism, the Philippine Tourism Forum was held in Manila, Philippines on 29 August 2019, in celebration of the 52nd ASEAN Founding Anniversary.

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity's Mary Kristerie A. Baleva, External Relations and Policy Specialist, served as one of the panelists for the session on *Responsible Tourism: A Key to Sustainable Development*. She presented the ASEAN Heritage Parks Programme and its thematic areas in promoting recreation, tourism, and ecotourism.



Sixteen officials from India's Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change visited the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines, as part of their training programme, Climate-Smart Forest Governance with the College of Forestry and Natural Resources of the University of the Philippines Los Baños.

The ACB shared its relevant projects, particularly on mainstreaming biodiversity and climate change through ecosystems-based adaptation.

His Excellency, Republic of Korea Ambassador to the ASEAN Lim Sungnam, Minister-Counselor Kwon Jae-Hwan, and First Secretary Choi Yong Ho visited the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) on 15 August 2019.

ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim acknowledged the long-standing partnership on biodiversity conservation between Korea and the ASEAN since 2000, through the ASEAN-Korea Environmental Cooperation Project (AKECOP), which helped restore degraded forest ecosystems in the ASEAN.

During the meeting, the Korean officials and the ACB discussed future collaborations between Korea and the ASEAN. Recognising transboundary issues in biodiversity, they discussed the possibility of a forest restoration project among neighboring countries.

The ACB looks forward to working with Korea in halting biodiversity loss in the ASEAN.



As part of the 29th International Congress for Conservation Biology (ICCB), Sheila G. Vergara, Director of the Biodiversity Information Management Unit of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity, served as one of the speakers of the *Saving Wildlife and Wild Places Forum* on 25 July 2019 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

ICCB is a global forum for addressing conservation challenges and for presenting new research in conservation science and practice. Attended by more than 2,000 conservationists and students, the ICCB was spearheaded by the Society for Conservation Biology.



ACB attends the commemoration of the 52nd founding anniversary of ASEAN at the Philippines' Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), in preparation for the ASEAN Day on 8 August. Together with representatives from ASEAN Embassies, former Philippine Ambassadors to ASEAN, DFA officials, and persons with disabilities (PWDs), Secretary Locsin opened a photo exhibit with the theme *ASEAN: Leaving No One Behind*, in honour of the ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in ASEAN Community.

The ACB also supports the mainstreaming of the rights of PWDs through art and biodiversity. The ACB has been working with Samantha Kaspar, a visual artist with special needs who promotes biodiversity conservation through art, and in spreading awareness on the benefits of biodiversity to health.



As part of the Regional Consultative Meeting on Biodiversity Mainstreaming Across Agricultural Sectors in Asia and the Pacific convened by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim, presented on *Strengthening Regional Synergies between Agricultural Sectors and Biodiversity*, highlighting how ASEAN mainstreams biodiversity in the agriculture sector. The meeting ran from 17 to 19 July 2019 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Based on the FAO's State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture Report launched in February 2019, biodiversity is essential for food and agriculture, but biodiversity is in decline. The ACB is working closely with the ASEAN Member States to mainstream biodiversity in agricultural sectors and promote uptake of biodiversity-friendly agricultural practices.

PH hosts grand cultural show to raise ASEAN awareness



The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) of the Philippines spearheaded the ASEAN Month Celebration with ***Sama-Sama ASEAN Para Sa Kalikasan (ASEAN, Our One SEA)***, a free cultural show on 31 August 2019 in Manila. The multi-arts concert was celebrated in accordance with Proclamation No. 282 (s. 2017) declaring August as ASEAN Month. This was also part of the regional commemoration of the 52nd Anniversary of ASEAN.

With its peoples at the heart of ASEAN cooperation, the *Sama-Sama ASEAN Para sa Kalikasan* concert enjoined the general public in the regional celebration and to further raise awareness about ASEAN, the values the cooperation fosters, and its role in the development of the country and the Region.

The show placed the spotlight on our shared environment and our one desire and responsibility to protect nature, focusing on the ASEAN region's rich marine life, through commemorative speeches, music and dance performances based on environmental awareness, conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity to further highlight the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) as the only regional hub for biodiversity conservation hosted by the Philippines.

National Artist and Chairman of the NCCA Virgilio S. Almario emphasised the relationship of culture and

biodiversity in his message. "In ASEAN's context, nature is almost equivalent to culture. We have numerous beliefs, rituals, art forms, and traditions that are linked to the biodiversity of the countries in our region...This is why we are holding this one-of-a-kind concert: to showcase the artists and cultural performers who are with us in our advocacy for nature," he said in Filipino.

From the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Assistant Secretary of the Office of ASEAN Affairs Junever Mahilum-West highlighted the importance of ASEAN and the Philippines' cooperation with its neighboring ASEAN Member States. She elaborated on the ASEAN's programmes that will boost trade, development, peace and security. Additionally, Assistant Secretary Mahilum-West reminded the audience of the need to value and conserve the region's rich environment and culture.

"We deeply appreciate this initiative of the Philippines to promote awareness on ASEAN and on the values of biodiversity, particularly of our teeming marine life in the Region. It is high time for us to emphasise the interconnectivity of the Region's marine ecosystems, for the public to realise that what we do in our country will affect the overall health of the Region's biodiversity," said ACB executive director, Theresa Mundita Lim. "One of the most pressing issues that threatens our

marine life is plastic pollution. Every year, the world produces around five trillion plastic bags. These bags, which are usually utilised in just a few minutes or hours, take centuries to decompose. Before being decomposed, these wastes pile up in lands and easily washed up into streams, and rivers until they reach the oceans; polluting waters, destroying aquatic habitats, and eventually kill marine species," she added.

With its commitment to sustain awareness about ASEAN in the country, the Philippine ASEAN Committee on Culture and Information prepared a showcase of cross-cultural presentations and performances that feature ASEAN dances from Indonesian artist Aisha Munaf, Guang Ming Dance Project, and the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group. Musical prowess was also rendered by the Viva Voce, and Bayang Barrios at Ang Naliyagan Band.

In addition to the DFA, agency partners who joined the multi-sectoral celebration in the Philippines included the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the National Parks Development Committee, the Presidential Communications Operations Office, Philippine Information Agency, People's Television (PTV4), the Bureau of Communications Services and the ACB.