



Officials from the ASEAN Member States, ASEAN entities and from the European Union join over 300 participants in the Sixth ASEAN Heritage Parks in Pakse, Lao PDR held from 21 to 24 October 2019

ASEAN Heritage Parks' communities, stakeholders in focus at AHP6

The Sixth ASEAN Heritage Parks Conference (AHP6), organised by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and the Lao PDR's Department of Forestry under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, brought focus on the pivotal role of community participation in effectively managing protected areas and contributing to biodiversity conservation efforts in the region.

"The ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHP) Programme is not only a measure to conserve protected areas, but also a means to achieve harmony between humans and nature. Many communities, especially those living in or near AHPs, depend on the parks' natural resources for their daily needs," ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said in her speech before an audience of about 300 officials, protected area managers, top experts, stakeholders, and partners in stewardship from ASEAN Member States and across the world.

She added that some of the indigenous peoples and local communities in the ASEAN have traditional knowledge and practices that can help preserve the biodiversity in the AHPs.

With the theme *Sustainability and Innovation for Parks and People—Celebrating 35 years of ASEAN Heritage Parks*, AHP6, held in Pakse in the Champasak province

of Lao PDR from 21 to 24 October 2019, celebrated the 35th anniversary of the AHP Programme, one of the flagship initiatives of the ASEAN.

With support from the European Union (EU), the German Development Cooperation through the KfW, German development agency GIZ, SwedBio, Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Japan Biodiversity Fund, AHP6 built on the experiences and knowledge of protected area managers and international experts to improve the AHP network and strengthen camaraderie among AHP stakeholders and other dialogue and development partners under the AHP Programme.

The AHP6 also featured the Marketplace and Exhibits, which highlighted the milestones, successes, and key accomplishments of the AHP Programme, including biodiversity-based products and good protected area management practices.

In a press briefing with Lao reporters, Lim said the ACB, as the Secretariat of the AHP Programme, supports the continuing capacity enhancement activities for park area managers and stakeholders, engaging all sectors, including women, youth, indigenous peoples and local communities, local authorities, and the private sector.

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EU envoy: Count on us in conserving ASEAN's biodiversity



ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim speaks with Ambassador to ASEAN Igor Driesmans during the latter's courtesy visit to the ACB headquarters. Photo by the ACB

The ASEAN continues to find an ally in the European Union (EU) for efforts aimed at protecting and conserving the region's rich biodiversity.

EU Ambassador to ASEAN Igor Driesmans, accompanied by Thomas Wiersing, Chargé d'Affaires of the EU delegation to the Philippines, and Xavier Canton-Lamousse, project manager of the EU, visited the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines, on 19 November 2019.

Driesmans and his delegation met with ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim and other ACB officials to discuss new avenues of cooperation in biodiversity conservation in the region.

"If you look at the data, protecting biodiversity will serve us all. If biodiversity is protected, it has an impact not just on the economy, but on climate change and possible conflicts around the world. It is really something that interests us all," Driesmans said in his message.

"Here in the ASEAN, we have seen some worrying trends and at the same time bright spots that we want to support and nurture, which is why the European Union is here...The ASEAN can continue to count on us," Driesmans said.

The ACB is implementing an EU-financed project *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN* or BCAMP, which is designed to improve the management of protected areas in the ASEAN region; develop and mobilise knowledge and scientific basis for biodiversity conservation; mainstream biodiversity into the education system; and strengthen the regional capacities in biodiversity conservation.

The five-year project, which started in 2017, is part of the EU's global strategy to contribute to global sustainability by ensuring ASEAN's rich biological diversity is conserved



From left to right: Mary Kristerie Baleva, External Relations and Policy Specialist; Clarissa Arida, Director of ACB's Programme Development and Implementation Unit; Robert Mather, BCAMP Technical Assistance Team Leader; Xavier Canton-Lamousse, Project Manager of the EU; EU Ambassador to ASEAN Igor Driesmans, ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim; Thomas Wiersing, Chargé d'Affaires of the EU delegation to the Philippines, and Nheden Amiel Sarne, ASEAN Heritage Parks Programme Coordinator

and sustainably managed, and by enhancing the region's social, economic, and environmental well-being.

"We will work with the ASEAN region in forestry management, fishery management, among others. These are part of our comprehensive work to move towards a more ambitious partnership in environment and climate action," the EU envoy said. Lim, for her part, said Driesmans' visit to the ACB, which is his first since he was appointed ambassador to ASEAN early this year, demonstrates ASEAN and EU's longstanding partnership in the region's biodiversity conservation.

"We are thankful that up to this day, the EU remains to be a strong partner of the ACB in improving protected area management and in curbing biodiversity loss through the BCAMP," Lim said.

Shortly after the meeting, the EU delegation took a short walk at the Mount Makiling Botanic Gardens, a recreational area in Mount Makiling Forest Reserve, which is one of the nine protected areas in the Philippines designated as ASEAN Heritage Parks.

Norway and ASEAN upholding biodiversity conservation in La Mesa Watershed

In a ceremonial tree planting in La Mesa Watershed on 18 November 2019, Norway showed its commitment to protecting biodiversity and combating climate change in the ASEAN region.

Norwegian Ambassador to the Philippines Bjørn Jahnsen, together with the Norwegian Ambassador to the ASEAN Morten Høglund led the ceremonial tree planting ceremony at the La Mesa Nature Reserve.

Norway is dialogue partner of ASEAN

Since 2015, Norway has been invited as a sectorial dialogue partner of



From L to R: Norwegian Ambassador to ASEAN Morten Høglund, Norwegian Ambassador to the Philippines Bjørn Jahnsen, ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim, Quezon City Local Government Head of Environmental Protection and Waste Management Andrea Villaroman, ABS-CBN Lingkod Kapamilya Bantay Kalikasan Program Director Jen Santos. Photo Courtesy of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Manila.

ASEAN, promoting cooperation in many areas such as peace and reconciliation, energy, trade and private sector development, and climate change and biodiversity.

At this event the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Manila committed to plant 500 indigenous seedlings in La Mesa Nature Reserve, covering one hectare of land in the watershed, in

partnership with the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and ABS-CBN Lingkod Kapamilya.

"This is a perfect time to reaffirm Norway's commitments to strengthen cooperation in conservation of biodiversity in the ASEAN region," said Norway's Ambassador to ASEAN Morten ...continued on page 5

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In his message to welcome the participants, Khambounnath Xayanone, Vice Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, highlighted the rich biodiversity and natural resources of Lao PDR, particularly of Nam Ha National Protected Area, the country's AHP. He cited the plan of Lao PDR to focus on establishing more national protected areas and other means to become a green country, and added that the conference was important to ensure that AHPs were effectively managed, contribute to the sustainable use of resources, enjoyed by current and future generations, support scientific research, and contribute to the mitigation of climate change impacts.

Meanwhile, EU Ambassador to Lao PDR Leo Faber in his speech stressed the EU's commitment to biodiversity conservation in the ASEAN through its *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN* (BCAMP) Project.

"The EU has put biodiversity conservation as one of the highest

priorities in its cooperation agenda," Faber said noting that as one of the largest contributors of biodiversity finance worldwide, the EU has provided EUR 1.3 billion for biodiversity-related interventions between 2007 and 2013.

The EU has pledged to double its assistance between 2015 and 2020 and increase it in the coming years.

"As we know, the real costs of the depletion or degradation of natural capital are felt most seriously at the micro-level and particularly by the poor," Faber said.

He added that the EU supports the effective management of the region's natural capital and helps make sure that biodiversity conservation is mainstreamed across sectors, such as agriculture, marine resources management, and water management.

Preparations for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which is expected to be adopted in the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the

Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity, also took centre stage at AHP6.

"The AHP6 represents an opportune time for us to take stock and reflect the past. It also lays out ambitious hopes for the future, especially as we are taking on a new journey towards the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity," said Ky-Anh Nguyen, ASEAN Secretariat's director of sustainable development directorate under the ASEAN for Socio-Cultural Community.

Apart from the ASEAN-EU Policy Dialogue on Protected Areas and Wildlife, AHP6 also showcased parallel sessions on accelerating progress on Aichi Biodiversity Target 11; species and wildlife conservation; innovative financing; business and biodiversity; women, youth, and indigenous peoples and local communities; sustainable livelihood and biodiversity-based products; and ecosystem-based solutions.

ASEAN speaks with one voice for post-2020 biodiversity framework

On the sidelines of the 23rd Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA23) of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), the International Union on the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) hosted an event to draw attention to the value of regional and subregional cooperation in the process of developing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The side event entitled, *Catalysing Regional Cooperation for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework*, was held on 27 November 2019.

Present in the side event were representatives from the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB); the South-East Europe Biodiversity Task Force; the Southeast Asia Biodiversity Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences; the Integration of the Amazon Protected Areas – IAPA project; the Southern African Development Community; the GIZ Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Implementation of Biodiversity Agreements; Mexico’s National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP); Directorate-General for Environment of the European Commission; the International Union for Conservation

of Nature’s Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia; and the Secretariat of the CBD.

“While national efforts will have to step up, subregional cooperation must be pursued so that efforts are addressing not just the national interests of the ASEAN Member States (AMS) but their regional concerns, as well,” said ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim, in a presentation at the side event.

Subregional programmes, particularly on prevention of extinction of species and the establishment of protected areas in key landscapes and seascapes, and mainstreaming of biodiversity across sectors, need to be systematic and well-coordinated, she said.

She cited reef interconnectivity as fish larvae travel across national borders. “With these flow of ocean currents, efforts in one area contribute to the adjacent area. Thus, cooperation and complementation of efforts is needed,” Lim noted.

Similarly, the responsibility of protecting migratory birds taking the route of the East Asian- Australasian Flyway also binds the AMS. The ASEAN Flyway Network, being led by Singapore, was created to mobilise the AMS to protect migratory water birds, their habitat and the livelihoods of people dependent upon them.

The side event aimed to gather views and experiences on both opportunities and challenges for integrating regional cooperation into the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and enhancing cooperation among regional platforms.

It is also expected to lead to the creation of an informal working group including major regional initiatives to further discuss strategies for integrating regional cooperation into the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and contribute to mobilising human, technical, and financial resources for enhancing regional cooperation.

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(L-R) Fernando Camacho, General Director of Institutional Development and promotion of the CONANP Mexico, Coordinator of the REDPARQUES; Karin Zaunberger, Policy Officer, Directorate General for Environment in the European Commission; Bruno Leles, Project Officer IUCN Regional Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia; Theresa Mundita Lim, Executive Director of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity; and Snezana Prokic, SBSTTA Focal Point for Serbia and BDTF deputy-focal point for Serbia.

ASEAN speaks with one voice for post-2020 biodiversity framework

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“The ASEAN as a group has made strides in giving common statements of positions on key agenda items in the previous meeting of SBSTTA. We continue to aim to make the ASEAN voice heard on the international stage, particularly in the development of the post-2020 global framework which would set the direction of all our efforts,” Lim said.

The ACB joined delegates from countries, organisations, and communities at the five-day SBSTTA23, which aims to prepare for the negotiations in next year’s UN Biodiversity Conference in Kunming, China and the development of new ambitious and effective global biodiversity framework.

One of the CBD’s two permanent subsidiary bodies, SBSTTA provides recommendations for adoption at the biennial meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD. At present, the CBD has 196 parties.

The AMS, through the ACB, have been actively working with each other following the ASEAN Leaders’ Vision Statement on Partnership for Sustainability at the 34th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok, Thailand, which encourages AMS, with the support of the ACB, to provide inputs to the post-2020 framework.

Likewise, the ACB has been promoting the importance of sub-regional and regional cooperation in developing the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, most recently at the first Open-Ended Working Group Meeting on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in August this year and the Trondheim Conference on Biodiversity last July.

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Høglund. “We urge countries to act together to tackle the global challenge of climate change, and focus on the impact of these changing conditions in ASEAN and its international relations,” he added.

Tree planting

“The Norwegian Embassy in Manila is constantly looking for possibilities to reduce our carbon footprint here in the Philippines,” said Norwegian Ambassador to the Philippines Bjørn Jahnsen.

“By planting 500 seedlings this year, we are offsetting roughly 74 tons of carbon footprint equivalent to the projected carbon footprint that the embassy producing per annum,” he added.

The Embassy has specifically chosen to plant trees in the La Mesa Watershed, as this is the carbon dioxide sink of Metro Manila. The watershed is also a major source of water for some 12 million residents of Metro Manila.

La Mesa Watershed is part of the Angat-Ipo-La Mesa water system, which supplies most of the water supply of Metro Manila holding over 50 million cubic meters occupying an area of 27 square kilometers.

The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Manila has been actively working on projects and initiatives to make its workplace greener. This year, the Embassy also installed a 16-kilowatt peak (kWp) solar power system in the Ambassador’s residence.

Preserving biodiversity

“With land conversion and degradation rapidly gobbling up forests and other vital ecosystems, any effort to conserve the last standing forests that we have deserves praise. I am glad that we are not alone in protecting and preserving the remaining

biodiversity in the region,” says ACB Executive Director Mundita Lim.

“The Royal Norwegian Embassy’s commitment to support our fight against climate change, specifically the Embassy’s pledge to plant an estimate of 500 trees, could not have come at a better time. This supports the ASEAN’s latest undertaking the ASEAN Green Initiative, which was introduced during the 15th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment in Siem Reap, Cambodia, last October,” said Lim.

“The ASEAN Green Initiative aims to plant 10 million trees all over the ASEAN region and raise awareness about biodiversity and ecosystem services and its values. It intends to promote public and private investment in biodiversity and ecosystem services, and ensure that regional policies and strategies are supported by grassroots actions,” she added.

This year, Norway and ASEAN has signed an agreement to protect the environment and human wellbeing from plastic pollution. Norway is playing a leading role in promoting efforts for clean and healthy oceans around the world. This year, Norway hosted the Our Ocean Conference in Oslo where USD 64 billion of total was pledged to protect the oceans.

Norway is also about to sign an agreement on developing a system of information gathering to support conservation and sustainable management of coastal wetlands in the ASEAN region together with the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity. Norway is committed to reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions. Norway is also dedicated to enable vulnerable countries to adapt to climate change, prevent deforestation, and reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions. By 2030, Norway is targeting to lower its own greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent.

ASEAN sharpens focus on gender in biodiversity conservation

Factoring in gender roles and relations in policy-making is crucial in the success of biodiversity conservation efforts, experts in a regional training workshop conducted said.

Among the common insights that emerged from the workshop is the role of the special knowledge, skills, and experience of women in effective conservation programmes. In fishing communities, for example, women, who fish and gather shells in mangrove areas, would have different inputs from men, who usually fish at far-off coral reefs.

The five-day regional workshop from 9 to 13 December 2019 was organised by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) as part of their efforts to build a network of gender practitioners in biodiversity.

With representatives from ASEAN Member States (AMS) and government and non-government organisations as participants, the workshop sought to deepen understanding and build capacity among policy-makers and stakeholders in addressing gender and biodiversity issues in the ASEAN region.

Led by Tanya McGregor of the Secretariat of the CBD and CBD Gender Consultant Soma Chakrabarti Fezzardi, the first two days of the workshop were devoted on training trainers in gender mainstreaming, followed by a roll-out exercise where the new trainers facilitated a learning session attended by staff members of the ACB and its country partners.

The workshop also sought to gather inputs to ensure the gender responsiveness of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which charts the long-term direction of biodiversity conservation and takes the vision of the CBD on *Living in Harmony with Nature* by 2050.



Workshop participants discuss gender and biodiversity issues

In her remarks, ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said women are important partners in halting biodiversity loss.

“The CBD also recognises the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and affirms the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation for biodiversity conservation,” Lim said, citing from the CBD’s preamble.

The CBD is a global agreement signed by 196 parties, including all AMS, with main goals including biodiversity conservation, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.

Lim said the gender gaps in the region must be considered, citing the ASEAN Economic Community report that notes that women’s share of employment in agriculture vary from 28 per cent to a high 78 per cent among the AMS, but their work is usually unpaid and unaccounted for in the value chain, especially in agriculture.

“The gaps are still overwhelming for women. Women are usually the ones left behind,” Fezzardi, who facilitated

the training of trainers, noted. She added this is why it is important to include a gender lens in looking at biodiversity issues, and ensuring women’s voices are included in decision-making.

Fezzardi cited situations in the field where stakeholders are consulted. “We simply sit with the men, women, and children, and got each of their visions. In the end, mobilising a man’s potential, a woman’s potential, and a child’s potential, is good for the entire family and the community,” she said. “Ideally, there is empowering participation where women and men have voice and influence,” Fezzardi said.

Lim particularly noted improvements in women’s participation in the ASEAN region.

She said that in Indonesia, some women have organised themselves in informal groups to improve their credit access for their farming. In Myanmar, informal linkages among women farmers likewise exist.

“In some ASEAN Member States like Thailand, many women farmers have the sole or shared decision-making power with their husbands,” she said.

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Death of Last Sumatran Rhino in Malaysia a Wake-up Call – ACB

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) expressed sadness over the death of the last Sumatran rhinoceros in Malaysia, voicing its readiness to support intensified cooperation among ASEAN Member States (AMS) on preventing the extinction of critically endangered species.

“Seeing the extinction of species before our eyes is a tragedy of our time. The extinction of Sumatran rhino population in Malaysia is a loss that reverberates, not just in the ASEAN region, but throughout the globe,” ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said.

The local extinction of Sumatran rhinoceros in Malaysia took place following the death of the last female in captivity named “Iman” last Saturday. In Indonesia, there remain an estimated 80 rhino individuals, captive and in the wild.

“While there are various species conservation programmes being implemented to protect remaining populations of critically endangered species, there is a greater need for an increased strategic collaboration among the AMS, particularly on sharing resources to ensure continued viable populations of species,” Lim said.

She added that extinctions can be prevented in many ways, among them is protecting their known habitat, through exchange of knowledge and expertise, well-maintained and equipped captive breeding centers and well-funded species-specific conservation programmes.

Apart from poaching and habitat loss, studies show that isolation is among the biggest threats to Sumatran rhino populations, as they have a very unique reproductive behaviour and females of this species are known to develop complications in their reproductive systems if they go too long without mating.



Along with captive breeding, the establishment of effectively-managed protected areas is also a strategy for wildlife protection, the ACB executive director said.

“The ASEAN region is host to mega-diverse countries, and this brings with it the responsibility of addressing the challenges of wildlife depletion and extinctions, and ACB as the ASEAN regional intergovernmental organisation is committed to facilitate and support the AMS in collaboration to prevent biodiversity loss in the region.” Lim said.

Iman’s passing happened on the eve of the 23rd meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA23), where parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, including the AMS, lay the groundwork and prepare for the ambitious and effective post-2020 global biodiversity framework. This framework is aligned with the Aichi Biodiversity Target 12, which calls for the prevention of extinction of known threatened species and the improvement of their conservation status.

“We should not lose hope because there are certainly successful conservation programmes in the ASEAN. Nevertheless, the death of Iman serves as our wake-up call,” Lim said.

ASEAN sharpens focus on gender in biodiversity...

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A pilot exercise in the region, the training workshop tackled topics such as gender and biodiversity concepts, gender analysis and gender mainstreaming, relevant international policy commitments, and programming practicalities, including gender-responsive planning.

“As we look carefully at biodiversity plans, policies, and programmes in our organisations with a gender lens, and as we practice and enhance our capacities in gender analysis, we can have more gender-responsive, and in turn, more powerful and effective biodiversity conservation initiatives,” Lim said.



ACB: Keeping biodiversity intact a boon for farmers, tourism

Preserving the natural landscape and biodiversity improves the sustainability of farm operations, and in turn, farmers' incomes, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) said.

"Biodiversity, the variety of life on earth, provides the resources and supporting functions for farming and tourism. Thus, safeguarding biodiversity is essential to achieve sustainability in farm tourism for present and future generations," ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said during her presentation on sustainable farm tourism and conservation at the plenary session of the Sixth Philippine Farm Tourism Conference in Cebu City, Philippines, from 6 to 8 November 2019.

Speaking before an audience of agriculturists, farm and farm tourism business owners, representatives from government and non-government agencies, and researchers, Lim shared how biodiversity-friendly practices can boost farming and farm tourism.

She cited the "innovating farming method" of the farmers of Agusan Marsh in Agusan del Sur, Philippines as an example of adapting to the natural landscape.

Since water in the marsh often inundates farms in the rainy season, farmers decided to plant rice and other crops in floating bamboo paddies instead.

"Instead of trying to control the marsh, the locals have learned to adapt and build their farms according to the nature of the marsh," Lim said.

Additionally, keeping the Agusan Marsh healthy contributes to the local tourism and provides additional income from community members who run boat tours.



ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim emphasising the role of biodiversity in sustainable farm tourism

Lim also encouraged farmers to make the most of the natural landscape.

"Instead of cutting down trees, plant crops that thrive under the shade of trees like coffee," Lim said. Forests are important to the health of watersheds, which supply water for the irrigation of farms and serve people's daily needs.

The ACB executive director pitched multi-cropping, crop rotation, and other natural pest management methods instead of using pesticides, which threatens pollinators like bees. 75 per cent of the world's food crops and nearly 90 per cent of wild flowering species depend on pollination, according to an IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) report. A European Union-funded study estimated the value of pollination services to be approximately USD 169 billion per year.

Lim emphasised the need to strike a balance between fulfilling the needs of the business and of tourists, and maintaining the natural condition of the area.

Citing the principles of sustainable tourism from the United Nations

World Trade Organization, Lim explained, "farm tourism should fulfill the social, aesthetic, and economic needs of the farm owners and the tourists, while maintaining the life support systems, ecological processes, and cultural integrity of the area. These systems and processes and their benefits come from biodiversity, so we need to protect biodiversity".

Meanwhile, protecting iconic and charismatic species can also be a source of tourism-based livelihood.

Lim pointed out that in Cambodia, farmers practicing biodiversity-friendly agricultural methods like chemical-free cultivation help protect the critically endangered giant Ibis, the country's national bird. "Because Ibis birds are rare, tourists want to see them," Lim said. "Farmers also become tour guides, and it becomes additional income for them."

Reacting to Lim's presentation, former Philippine Tourism Secretary and current Chair and President of the International School of Sustainable Tourism Mina Gabor affirmed the importance of integrating biodiversity in farm tourism planning.

"Mahogany trees are water suckers," Gabor said. "And for some time now, we have noticed that any farm or anything that is planted near mahogany trees look under-nourished and farmers do not get the same healthy harvest as areas without mahogany." Gabor asked farmers to refrain from planting mahogany, and to alert the Philippines' Department of Environment and Natural Resources should mahogany be growing in their farms.

By applying biodiversity considerations like natural pest management, planting the right crops and trees, and adaptation to the natural environment to farm tourism, Lim said she is hopeful for the future of the farm tourism industry. She also emphasised the

importance of working together.

"If we from the different sectors – agriculture, tourism, biodiversity – work together, share our knowledge, and maximise resources, we can achieve sustainable farm tourism," Lim said.

Farm tourism is the business of attracting visitors and tourists to farm areas, generally for educational and recreational purposes, encouraging economic activity that can provide both the farm and the community additional income.



Floating bamboo paddies, an innovative farming method in Agusan Marsh, Agusan del Sur, Philippines. Photo courtesy of the Philippines' Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB)



The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) warmly welcomed Mohd Salleh Daim, head of the Sustainable Community Development Centre (SCDC) of Malaysia's Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and his colleague Mohd Ruzed Embong, Coordinator of SCDC, in their two-day visit at the ACB headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna.

Aiming to explore possible opportunities for collaboration, the Malaysian experts met with ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim and ACB representatives on 5 November 2019, and shared the initiatives of the SCDC in developing community-based protected area management and community-based ecotourism projects in the communities in Taman Negara National Park, one of Malaysia's ASEAN Heritage Parks. The ACB discussed with the representatives from SCDC how the Centre's programmes are similar to their

objectives, and how the two organisations can assist each other in fulfilling their goals.

The following day, Salleh and Ruzed, accompanied by ACB staff, spoke with representatives from the Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Council at the Pandin Lake in San Pablo, Laguna, to know more about how their communities are developing the ecotourism in the area, while at the same time sharing the stories of the communities of Taman Negara National Park. Following the visit to the lake, the group proceeded to Bangkong Kahoy Valley Nature Retreat and Field Study Center. Located in the Mount Banahaw-San Cristobal Protected Landscape, Bangkong Kahoy (which translates to Wooden Bench in Filipino), is founded and owned by an environmentalist, Dion Pullan.

ACB, SEARCA ink partnership on sustainable agriculture and biodiversity

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) renewed their partnership in integrating and mainstreaming biodiversity into agriculture.

ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim and SEARCA Director Glenn Gregorio signed the second Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for institutional cooperation in a ceremony held at the SEARCA hotel at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) on 4 November 2019.

The MOU is a continuation of the collaboration between the two

organisations in pursuing their shared objectives of promoting sustainable agriculture and biodiversity conservation.

“We are continuing this partnership to further our efforts in mainstreaming biodiversity in agriculture in the region. Mainstreaming is important because of the inextricable connection between agriculture and biodiversity. Together, our organisations can work to strike the balance between the two,” Lim said.

The ACB chief said agrobiodiversity—the variety and variability of animals, plants, and micro-organisms that are used

directly or indirectly for food and agriculture— can help address the world’s growing food demand and safeguard the region’s biodiversity.

Since 2016 when the first MOU was signed, the ACB and SEARCA have organised two regional workshops and published two papers on mainstreaming biodiversity in agriculture.

Among the outputs of the workshops was the ASEAN joint action plan on mainstreaming biodiversity in agriculture, which was endorsed by the ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity during its 29th meeting.

“We believe that our organisations have the right ingredients for a long and fruitful partnership,” Gregorio said noting that the ACB and SEARCA are both headquartered at UPLB and serving the same member countries of the ASEAN.

Under the new MOU, the ACB and the SEARCA will jointly undertake projects and activities covering thematic areas on agriculture and biodiversity, along with capacity enhancement activities and information exchange and awareness campaigns.



Workshop ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim and SEARCA Director Glenn Gregorio sign the MOU for institutional cooperation at the UPLB. Participants discuss gender and biodiversity issues.



The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) took part in the ASEAN Awareness Forum organised by the Philippines’ Presidential Communications Operations Office, featuring speakers from the ACB, the Philippines’ Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Tourism, and the Department of Trade and Industry. The forum on Panglao Island of the province of Bohol, Philippines, was attended by students, teachers, government employees, and members of the private sector of Bohol.

On behalf of the ACB, Public Relations Specialist Niña Catherine Calleja talked about the ASEAN’s rich biodiversity, the challenges the region is facing, and the various initiatives led by the ACB to address pressing environmental issues. “At the core of the ACB’s work is Communication, Education, and Public Awareness. Through our campaigns, we hope to transform the people’s mindsets, attitudes, and actions towards biodiversity conservation,” Calleja said.



The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) participated in the 7th Japan-ASEAN Science, Technology, and Innovation Platform (JASTIP) Symposium with the theme *Biodiversity, Genetic Resources and Innovative Bioresource Technology: Toward 2025 Sustainable Use of Biodiversity* held on 24 October 2019 in Serpong, Indonesia.

Access and Benefit Sharing Specialist of the ACB Elpidio Peria talked about *Balancing Economic Development and Biodiversity Protection – Biodiversity Value Chains & Certification of Products*.



The International Students Association Cultural Night gathered students from 17 countries around the world, including ASEAN Member States Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Students showcased their countries’ rich history and culture through traditional dances and performances at the University of the Philippines Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines.

Recognising both the rich biological and cultural diversity in ASEAN and the rest of the world, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) supported the cultural night themed *Unity in Diversity*. The ACB also promoted through its exhibit booth the Region’s natural treasures, including the ASEAN Heritage Parks, and emphasised the need to protect them.



In its bid to give back to its host communities, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) organised an outreach activity in Barangay Timugan in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines, regaling around 100 indigent children with environment stories and treating them to fun games, art activities, and meals. The staff members of the ACB took the opportunity to raise awareness on biodiversity conservation and their campaign *Oceans Are Fitter Without Our Litter*, in support of the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in ASEAN.

Environment Ministers Declare New ASEAN Heritage Parks

Five protected areas from Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam have joined the network of ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs), areas of high conservation value that best represent the region's rich natural resources and cultural identity.

Environment ministers from the ASEAN declared Hat Chao Mai National Park and Mu Ko Libong Non-hunting Area and Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park, both from Thailand; Lo Go-Xa Mat National Park and Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve of Viet Nam; and Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary of Myanmar as new AHPs during the 15th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment (AMME) and related meetings held from 7 to 10 October 2019 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

"We are happy to announce that we now have 49 ASEAN Heritage Parks. These are models of effective protected area management," said Theresa Mundita Lim, executive director of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB).

The ACB serves as the Secretariat of the AHP Programme, a flagship initiative of the ASEAN that recognises national parks and nature reserves with outstanding wilderness and biodiversity values.

"These additions to our growing list of protected areas in the region demonstrate ASEAN's intensified and unified efforts to conserve a wider area and cover all types of ecosystems," Lim said noting that of the 49 AHPs, 12 are marine and coastal parks.

The AHP programme encourages the sustainable and equitable management of protected areas to contribute to the progress of achieving Aichi Target 11 under the Convention on Biological Diversity. Target 11 calls for the conservation of at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 per cent of coastal and marine

areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, by 2020.

"The AHPs represent the rich and diverse species and ecosystem of the ASEAN region. We hope to cover more areas in line with our main goal of reducing the rate of biodiversity loss in the region," Lim said.

For a protected area to be an AHP, it must meet criteria, including ecological completeness, representativeness, naturalness, high conservation importance, legally gazetted conservation areas, approved management plan, transboundary, uniqueness, high ethno-biological significance, and importance for endangered biodiversity.

The AMME is held every two years for the environment ministers to discuss a wide range of environmental issues. The 15th AMME tackled biodiversity conservation, climate change, environmentally sustainable city, coastal and marine environment, environmental education, chemical

and hazardous waste management, transboundary haze pollution control, and eco-schools.

The ASEAN environment ministers also attended related meetings, including the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, the 16th ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, and South Korea) Environment Ministers Meeting, and the ASEAN-Japan Ministerial Dialogue on the Environmental Cooperation.

AHP6

The new AHPs and other conservation topics are expected to take the spotlight at the Sixth ASEAN Heritage Park Conference (AHP6) from 21 to 24 October 2019 in Pakse, Lao PDR.

With theme *Sustainability and Innovation for Parks and People—Celebrating 35 years of ASEAN Heritage Parks*, the AHP6 will gather protected area managers, representatives from international



Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary

environmental organisations, businesses, academe, traditional and local communities, and youth to discuss knowledge and best practices in managing protected areas.

Organised by the ACB and the Department of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Lao PDR with support from the European Union (EU), the German Development Cooperation through the KfW, German development agency GIZ, SwedBio, Convention on Biological Diversity, and Japan Biodiversity Fund, the conference aims to improve the AHP network and strengthen camaraderie among AHP stakeholders and other development partners.

Hat Chao Mai National Park and Mu Ko Libong Non-hunting Area

Hat Chao Mai National Park and Mu Ko Libong Non-hunting Area are protected areas situated beside each other in Trang Province, Southern Thailand, towards the Andaman Sea. Declared as Ramsar wetlands of international importance in 2002, the two sites possess high ecosystem

identified floral species and 50 faunal species, which have been listed as critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable species, and nearly threatened. Unique rock formations, such as caves, limestone formations, cliffs, and sinkholes can also be found in the sites.

Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park

The Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park is a protected area situated in Surat Thani Province in Thailand. With an area of 102 square kilometres, it is an archipelago and a protected area composed of diverse ecosystems such as coral reefs, seagrass, mangroves, and karst ecosystems. It is a popular tourist destination featuring panoramic views of the area, geological formations, and sandy beaches. The area is also known to offer numerous ecosystem services, especially on the life cycle of mackerels, which is a very important commercial fish product in Thailand. It is home to endangered and threatened species. Among others, the orchid Ang Thong Lady

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Hat Chao Mai National Park and Mu Ko Libong Non-hunting Area



Lo Go-Xa Mat National Park

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Slipper (*Paphiopedilum niveum*) is endemic only to this area.

The area was recognised as a Ramsar site in 2002. It was also awarded a five-star beach rating by the Pollution Control Department of Thailand for the sound environmental management of the area.

Lo Go-Xa Mat National Park

Located in Tay Ninh Province of Viet Nam, Lo Go-Xa Mat National Park covers a total area of 191.50 square kilometres of core zone and 186 square kilometres of buffer zones. The Park plays an important role in the conservation and development of biodiversity values, border protection, and natural landscapes, especially the forest and wetlands habitats of the transitional region between the Central Highlands, Southern Lowlands, and Mekong Delta ecoregions of Viet Nam. The Park was established to conserve threatened plant and animal species. It serves as a location for scientific research, environmental education,



Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve

and ecotourism development. This site is also potentially important for transboundary conservation action between Viet Nam and Cambodia.

Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve

Ngoc Linh is the second highest mountain range in Viet Nam,

following the Hoang Lien Mountain, the highest in South Viet Nam and Indochina. The Ngoc Linh mountain has a strongly fragmented terrain and is a transitional area between the Northern Annamite Range and the Southern Annamite Range, between the coastal plain and the Central Highlands. With these characteristics, Ngoc Linh has a unique location that creates high and unique values of biodiversity.

Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary

Situated in the largest contiguous landscape in Myanmar, Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary is home to rare wildlife species, including seven Asian wild cat species and their prey; endemic species like Burmese Roofed Turtle; and endangered species such as Asian elephant, Bengal tiger, Dhole, and Shortridge's langur.

It is also a haven for other animal and plant species which include: 16 orchid species; 38 mammal species; 266 bird species; 77 reptile and amphibian species; and more than 100 butterfly species. This 215,072-hectare sanctuary can be found in Sagaing Region in Northern Myanmar.



Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park

Exhibit for a Cause Buoy Campaign vs. Marine Pollution

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) on 17 October 2019 brought its campaign against plastic pollution, *Oceans are Fitter without Our Litter* to the art exhibit for biodiversity and autism awareness in Taguig City, Philippines.

The campaign supports the commitments of the ASEAN Member States (AMS) to the Bangkok Declaration Combating Marine Debris in the ASEAN Region, issued at the 34th ASEAN Summit held in June this year.

The ACB, in partnership with the Center for Possibilities Foundation, held an exhibit for a cause at the Enderun Colleges in Taguig City, Philippines, featuring 40 paintings of Samantha Kaspar, a 22-year-old artist with autism.

With themes on biodiversity and environment depicted in her artworks, the exhibition highlights the rich biodiversity, the variety, and variability of life in the ASEAN region and the importance of conserving and protecting it.

The logo of ACB's campaign against plastic pollution features Samantha's painting of an iconic sea turtle.

"Plastic pollution is a serious threat to biodiversity with 1 million seabirds and over 100,000 marine animals die from plastic pollution every year, according to the United Nations Environment Programme," ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said in her speech before an audience comprising members of the private sector, government officials, and dignitaries.

Plastic bags have an uncanny resemblance to jelly fish, which is a food for sea turtles. Marine plastic debris is threatening the population of sea turtles. Of the seven species of marine turtles in the world, three are classified by the International



Union for Conservation of Nature as endangered species and another three as critically endangered. Six of the species of marine turtles are found in Southeast Asia.

"We are urging all of you to support the ACB's campaign against plastic pollution. Without the marine animals, we won't have any more inspiration for Samantha to paint," Lim said.

Lim stressed that each AMS is working towards the reduction and prevention of marine debris.

Antoinette Taus, who was recently designated by the United Nations Environment Programme as its National Goodwill Ambassador for the Philippines, was the emcee of the exhibit's programme.

Among those present at the exhibit were Switzerland's Ambassador to the Philippines Alain Gaschen, Czech Republic's Ambassador to the Philippines Jana Sediva, Secretary Carlito Galvez Jr. of Office of Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs' Office of the ASEAN Affairs Junever Mahilum-West.

"Let us, through our individual and collective efforts, reduce our consumption of single-use plastic like plastic bottles... Let us encourage each other and our leaders in our communities, in the private sector, and in our respective nations, to initiate transformative change for clean and thriving aquatic ecosystems," said Lim.



22-year old artist Samantha Kaspar created artworks with themes on biodiversity and environment

ASEAN environment ministers call for intensified cooperation for biodiversity

Top officials from the environment ministries of the ASEAN Member States (AMS) convened on 8 October 2019 in the 15th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment (15th AMME), where the most pressing environmental issues in the Region, including the alarming rate of biodiversity loss due to climate change, plastic pollution, and transboundary haze, were discussed.

The meeting kicked off with a tree planting ceremony held in front of the world-renowned Angkor Wat. This marks the soft launch of the ASEAN Green Initiative, a testament of ASEAN's commitment to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and to ensure that its regional policies and strategies are supported by a broad base of stakeholders, including the youth, and traditional and local communities.

Deputy Prime Minister Aun Pornmoniroth of Cambodia stressed the need for intensified regional cooperation in preventing and responding to environmental challenges in the now disaster-prone ASEAN. "Climate change and environment-related issues are not a responsibility of a single country. It is our problem. Our responsibility," he said in his speech as he officially opened the 15th AMME.

One ASEAN for biodiversity

During the 15th AMME, the ASEAN ministers recognised the efforts of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) in facilitating regional coordination among the AMS, dialogue and development partners, and other relevant international organisations, for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the Region.

Another part of the meeting agenda is the discussion on the Third ASEAN Conference on Biodiversity (ACB 2020) which will be held in Putrajaya, Malaysia from 16 to 19 March 2020 to prepare for the 15th Meeting of



ASEAN Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi delivers his opening remarks for the 15th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment

the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) in China. The ACB 2020 will be organised by the ACB in cooperation with the Government of Malaysia.

Malaysia lauded the tremendous efforts of the ACB in supporting the ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity and encouraged all AMS to actively participate in the ACB 2020 to consolidate ASEAN's efforts in biodiversity conservation and to enhance its presence as a strong regional strong bloc in the upcoming COP15.

Declaration of new ASEAN Heritage Parks

One of the highlights of the 15th AMME is the declaration of five protected areas from Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam as new ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs). These are: Hat Chao Mai National Park and Mu Ko Libong Non-hunting Area and Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park, both from Thailand; Lo Go-Xa Mat National Park and Ngoc Linh Nature Reserve of Viet Nam; and Htamanthi Wildlife Sanctuary of Myanmar.

ASEAN Secretary-General Lim Jock Hoi emphasised the significance of the meeting as a venue to discuss the next steps of the ASEAN concerning the environment. "The region's biodiversity and ecosystems are essential to the economic, social

and environmental wellbeing of the ASEAN people, contributing to agriculture, food security and livelihoods, and the preservation of indigenous cultures," he said.

The Secretary-General added that the ASEAN has listed 44 protected areas as AHPs through the ACB, the Secretariat of the AHP Programme.

"The AHP Programme is a flagship programme of the ASEAN that was established to recognise national parks and nature reserves with outstanding wilderness and biodiversity values. It offers opportunities to strengthen regional connectivity and cooperation, as ecosystems and their services transcend national borders," said Theresa Mundita Lim, executive director of the ACB.

Presently, the network has 49 AHPs, following the Sixth AHP Conference held in Pakse, Lao PDR from 21 to 24 October 2019, where five new AHPs were officially recognised.

Three related meetings were held back-to-back with the 15th AMME. These include: the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution; the 16th ASEAN+3 (China, Japan and South Korea) Environment Ministers Meeting; and the ASEAN-Japan Ministerial Dialogue on the Environmental Cooperation.