

15-16 December 2020

Statement by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity

SPECIAL VIRTUAL SESSION FOR SBSTTA-24 AND SBI-03 ON BIODIVERSITY, ONE HEALTH AND COVID-19

Thank you, distinguished Chairs of the SBSTTA and SBI.

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity or the ACB, is a regional intergovernmental organisation established by the 10 Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to facilitate subregional action in achieving the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The link between biodiversity and health is being highlighted through the ACB's mainstreaming programme. We have been engaging with different sectors, such as health, infrastructure, and tourism, on integrating biodiversity considerations into development processes to prevent biodiversity loss.

In recognition of the varying financial and technical capacities of the ASEAN Member States, the ACB collaborates with the CBD and other partners to scale up policy actions and capacity building programmes. Even prior to this pandemic, the ACB, in partnership with, the CBD and the ASEAN Secretariat, and the Philippines, as host, conducted a joint meeting of biodiversity and public health focal points in the sub-region to assess the nexus between biodiversity and health, food and nutrition, and traditional medicine in ASEAN.

Now more than ever, the Centre works closely with ASEAN Member States to support priority actions to address the health crisis, which priorities are now reflected in the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and Implementation Plan that was recently adopted by the ASEAN leaders. The Recovery Framework charts the whole-of-ASEAN approach, and recognizes the importance of nature-based solutions, wildlife species conservation, and mainstreaming biodiversity across relevant sectors, as part of the path to recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 and the prevention of future pandemics.

It is in light of these developments that One Health approaches may be articulated in the goals of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and in Targets 1, 3 to 9, and 11, considering the inextricable link between biodiversity, human health, and zoonotic diseases, as Malaysia had emphasised. Protected area networks such as the ASEAN Heritage Parks can be optimized as a platform for more innovative and holistic approaches to biodiversity conservation beyond site and species conservation objectives, to include health crises recovery and prevention.

Moreover, the contribution of regional and subregional organisations in facilitating the concerted efforts of State Parties, enhancing interlinkages among various sectors, and integrating diverse perspectives, as are being done in the ASEAN, may be reflected through operative language in the framework's provisions on Enabling Conditions.

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity welcomes collaborations and partnerships to continue scaling up capacity building, biodiversity mainstreaming, resource mobilization, and communication, education and public awareness initiatives to halt biodiversity loss with a view to addressing existing and emerging diseases, from the national, to the subregional, regional and global levels. Moreover, in support of Malaysia's initiative on wildlife disease surveillance, the ACB welcomes future joint programmes directed at abating potential zoonotic diseases and preventing human infections at the subregional level.

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