



ASEAN-Korea Biodiversity Cooperation Seminar

“Current and Future Challenges to Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development in the ASEAN Region”

Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Brunei Darussalam

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Keynote Address

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Bismillah Hirahmaneer Raheem.

Chairman of Organizing Committee, invited speakers, distinguished guests, friends, ladies and gentlemen.

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh and a very good morning to all of you.

May I begin by thanking the Organising Committee for ASEAN-Korea Biodiversity Cooperation Seminar for inviting me to deliver a keynote address at this seminar on **“Current and Future Challenges to Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development in the ASEAN Region”**.

I am indeed honored to join you all this morning as you will be discussing on a topic that is critical to the sustainability of our planet and our way of living. I appreciate your presence here at this seminar. I am sure everyone can share their respective knowledge and expertise and help address our challenges and concerns in the conservation and sustainable development of biodiversity in the ASEAN region.

I also take this opportunity to extend my deep appreciation and heartiest congratulations to the Republic of Korea for assisting ASEAN’s efforts in sustainably managing its rich biodiversity for the benefit of regional and global communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe this seminar is timely organized. It is an avenue for us to formulate collective approaches and efforts in building up our institutional capacities and capabilities as well as enhancing our research & development network that addresses the challenges of conservation and sustainable management of the region’s biodiversity.

As you know, ASEAN occupies only 3% of the earth's surface, yet it contains over 20% of all known species of plants, animals and marine creatures. In that respect, ASEAN is recognized as one of the mega biodiversity hotspot in the world. Furthermore, with a 43% forest cover as compared to a world average of 30% forest cover, ASEAN is also recognised as one of the most densely forested areas in the planet. So any advancement in our efforts towards conserving and sustainably managing our biodiversity in ASEAN will have tremendous impact on our planet. Hence, within ASEAN there are two significant initiatives concerning biodiversity conservation that is the **'Heart of Borneo' (HOB)** and **'Coral Triangle Initiative' (CT)** whose membership are partly ASEAN member countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Noting that the topic of the seminar is about the challenges for conservation and sustainable development in biodiversity, let me highlight a few of the issues that we are currently facing.

One is related to governance for example with the HOB initiative. The Island of Borneo is governed by three countries (Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia) and the distribution of its rich biodiversity is in a contiguous area under three different jurisdictions. The challenge for each government therefore is to find a workable solution that will protect the sovereign right of each country in their respective territories, while achieving the common goal of conservation and sustainable development of the island's rich biodiversity. Thus, the conservation and management of biodiversity resources in such situation requires a trans-boundary approach.

The second challenge that I see, is finding the right balance between biodiversity conservation and economic activities from land and water resources. We have noted that many of the developments are biased towards deriving economic benefits at the expense of healthy ecosystems and biodiversity habitats. If this trend continues, our very existence in this planet is under threat. While we understand the importance of economic development, our sustainability depends on striking the right equilibrium for

achieving those two equally important goals. This, I believe, requires holistic and integrated approaches in land as well as water resources development planning and management.

These are only some of the issues and challenges that we are facing and I am sure this seminar will bring out other issues and challenges.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As our contribution to regional efforts at conservation and the sustainable development of biodiversity, Brunei Darussalam has set its own policy. Our policy includes the conservation and the sustainable development of the genetic resources derived from biodiversity. This encompasses the need to protect access to these resources while encouraging the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of these resources. We also want to ensure that the knowledge, innovations and traditional lifestyles and practices of indigenous and local communities will remain relevant to conservation and the sustainable use of biological diversity.

Additionally, the country's accession to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) on July 2008 has formalized and further strengthened its on-going conservation efforts and strategies on sustainable uses of biological and natural resources in accordance with national and international standards.

With intact biological landscape, Brunei Darussalam has set its strategic plan of actions with a vision to be one of the mega-biodiversity nations in the World. At present, we are now looking into formulating a Biodiversity Law that will institutionalize existing initiatives on biodiversity conservation. This law among others will highlight institutional reforms on biological resources management; benefit sharing and biological prospecting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I end my keynote address, let me once again express my appreciation to the Republic of Korea for supporting this seminar. This ASEAN-Korea Seminar is not just refreshing, but is also an avenue for building up regional commitments to preserve our remaining biodiversity.

And on behalf of the Government of Brunei Darussalam, I also thank the Republic of Korea for giving Brunei Darussalam the honour to host this seminar. We are indeed very proud and privileged for receiving such recognition.

Once again I would like to thank the Organizing Committee for inviting me to this seminar and deliver a keynote address. Lastly, I wish the organizer every success for the seminar and all of you a fruitful discussion.

Thank you. Wabillahi taufiq wal hidayah.

Wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.