



PRESS RELEASE

BRUNEI'S PEAT SWAMPS ARE ONE OF A KIND AND HOLD HIGH BIOMASS AND CARBON STOCK

Bandar Seri Begawan

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The Brunei Darussalam Conference on Biodiversity, lasting three days from June 11 to 13, 2024, was inaugurated today at the International Convention Centre, Berakas.

With the theme "Biodiversity: Nature's Blueprint for Sustainability," the conference is co-organised by the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism through the Forestry Department and Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) in conjunction with the Brunei Mid-Year Conference and Exhibition 2024 (Brunei MYCE 2024).

Present as the guest of honour and subsequently delivering remarks and officiating the opening of the conference was Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr. Haji Abdul Manaf bin Haji Metussin, the Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism.

The minister emphasized the critical role of innovative revenue streams like carbon trading in driving sustainable economic growth. His remarks underscored the dual benefits of environmental protection and economic development. The minister stated, "Alongside promoting ecotourism activities and non-extractive means to generate income, we may also explore its potential as a way of earning revenue like Carbon Trading for economic development. Protecting these ecosystems ensure sustainable environment and create opportunities for revenue generation that benefits local communities and national economies."

Later during second keynote presentation, Mr. Gerry Ong, Honorary President of Climate Change & Sustainability Work Group Leader at the ASEAN Federation of Land Surveying and Geomatics (ASEAN FLAG) and Dr. Deepthi Chimalakonda, Head of Carbon and Biodiversity, Arkadiah Technology Pte Ltd shared their findings from a collaboration project conducted with Brunei National Forest Resources Inventory consultant, Lunima Sdn. Bhd. Based on the findings, Brunei Darussalam's peat swamp forests have a significantly higher aboveground biomass (AGB) range of 470 to 560 tons per hectare, in contrast to other tropical rainforest countries in insular Asia which have an average AGB range of 350 tons per hectare. This disparity highlights that Brunei Darussalam's peat swamp forests are old growth forests and hold high biomass stocks.

Earlier, before Keynote Presentation 2, the event featured Keynote Presentation 1: "Fostering a Green, Connected, and Biodiverse ASEAN for a Sustainable Future" by Professor Watanabe Tetsuya, President of the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA). He highlighted the importance the ASEAN Digital Economy Framework (DEFA) as a critical component of the strategy for sustainable development. By leveraging digital technologies,

ASEAN can drive inclusive growth and sustainability. For instance, blockchain technology offers a decentralized and transparent platform for verifying carbon credits, ensuring accountability in carbon markets.

Among the objectives of this conference are to connect policy-makers, academics and non-governmental sectors with a regional network of biodiversity leaders and provide a powerful platform to share knowledge, research findings and best practices globally; and to explore opportunities for green economic growth, including eco-tourism and market initiatives such as carbon market.

About 52 papers are to be presented at the conference, divided into two plenary sessions (Plenary Session 1: *Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework*, Plenary Session 2: *Research Opportunities in Brunei's Peatland*), and 7 thematic sessions (1. Ecosystem Services: The Lifeline of Biodiversity, 2. Conservation Innovations: Restoring and Safeguarding Biodiversity, 3. Youth Engagement in Biodiversity: Empowering the Next Generation, 4. Blue Biodiversity: Conserving Marine Life for a Resilient Ocean, 5. Biodiversity's Role in Building Resilience to Climate Change, 6. Biodiversity's Contribution to Sustainable Economies, and 7. Scientific Expedition: Exploring Brunei Darussalam's Biodiversity).

The three-day conference is attended by both local and international experts, academics, government agencies, relevant private sector representatives, non-governmental organisations, researchers, students, participants who have joined previous scientific expedition as well as conference participants attending virtually.

Also present at the opening ceremony of the conference were Foreign Head of Missions in Brunei Darussalam; Permanent Secretaries from the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Development; Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Teknologi Brunei; Acting Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Brunei Darussalam; Deputy Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism; senior government officials; experts and invited speakers from within and outside the country; representatives of relevant private sector stakeholders; and conference participants.

Prior to the conference, the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism, through the Forestry Department in collaboration with UBD, also organised a Scientific Expedition themed 'Exploring Brunei Darussalam's Biodiversity,' which took place over 10 days from May 30 to June 8 in the Batu Apoi Forest Reserve, Temburong.

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Prepared by:
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