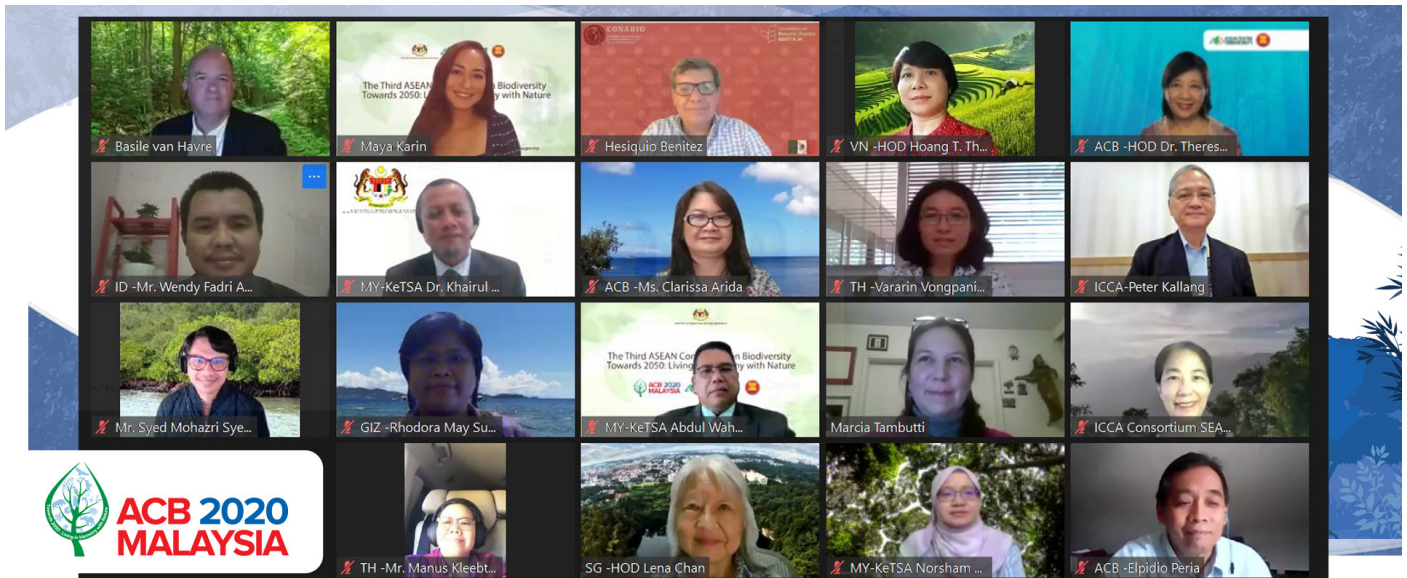


ACB Beats

The Official Newsletter of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity • APRIL–JUNE 2021

Third ASEAN Conference on Biodiversity: ASEAN looks to greener investments, nature-based solutions for better future



The Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources (KeTSA) of Malaysia and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) concluded the Third ASEAN Conference on Biodiversity.

The closing event of the conference gathered more than 700 participants from across the ASEAN region via Zoom on 5 July 2021, many of whom were representatives from government agencies of the member states. With the theme *Towards 2050: Living in Harmony with Nature*, the event was likewise livestreamed on Facebook.

In his message, ASEAN Secretary-General Dato Lim Jock Hoi said future actions must focus on further promoting greener investments, nature-based solutions, and more socially responsible practices.

“The next five years presents a solid ground and I am optimistic that our biodiversity mission will be sustained,” Dato Lim Jock Hoi said citing initiatives in the region, such as the project *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN* (BCAMP), the ASEAN Heritage Parks Programme, and the soon-to-be launched ASEAN Green Initiative.

“These demonstrate our resolve to reduce the loss of habitats and wildlife, as well as to conserve and ensure

the integrity of ecosystems in the region. All these can only be achieved if all of us continue to work together in protecting our ecosystems and biological resources.”

Welcoming participants, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources of Malaysia Datuk Seri Dr. Shamsul Anuar Bin Nasarah said the conference sought to promote biodiversity conservation in the region and strengthen the ASEAN Member States’ position to the upcoming 15th Conference of Parties (COP 15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

“Malaysia continues to make advances towards fulfilling its share in the global commitment on protecting biodiversity by taking comprehensive measures to ensure that the country’s economic development does not sacrifice its biodiversity, rather have it go hand in hand,” the minister said.

The conference was originally scheduled for March 2020 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, but was postponed and later restructured to a virtual format due to concerns over the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Third ASEAN Conference on Biodiversity: ASEAN looks to greener investments, nature-based solutions for better future

From September to December 2020, four sub-conferences on themes such as the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (GBF), mainstreaming biodiversity, transformative change and innovations, and business and biodiversity have been convened online.

“Integrated and synergistic approaches towards recovery and progress are possible with multi-stakeholder participation where sectors, from the public to the private, from small communities to huge industries, can put nature and biodiversity at the core of economic and development plans,” ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said in her opening remarks.

Ambitious, realistic framework

Officials of the ASEAN Member States and representatives of the private sector and civil society organisations delivered their interventions and positions on the post-2020 GBF.

Some member states expressed hope for an ambitious but realistic framework that can be translated into concrete actions.

Lao PDR highlighted the need to increase the technical assistance to least developed and developing countries and set a clear provision of new and additional financial resources, including through the CBD’s financial mechanism.

Singapore recommended protecting the diversity of ecosystems, reducing carbon emissions, restoring natural ecosystems, innovation in science and technology, and everyone’s involvement in the efforts to implement the post-2020 GBF.

Thailand highlighted mainstreaming biodiversity in key development sectors, including agriculture, fisheries, energy, manufacture, infrastructure, and tourism to address the drivers of biodiversity loss and apply best practices on

sustainable use. Indonesia emphasised the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity and involvement of all stakeholders, highlighting principles of justice in access and benefit sharing for local communities.

Brunei Darussalam said nature-based solutions must be part of the approach in strategic planning and at the core of further enhancing the resilience to face present and future challenges.

Keynote messages

The conference featured key messages on updates from the discussion related to the development of the post-2020 GBF by Basile van Havre, Co-Chair of the Open-Ended Working Group on the post-2020 global biodiversity framework of the CBD, and by Hesiquio Benitez Diaz, current chair of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice.

Deputy Secretary-General for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Kung Phোক shared the post-pandemic recovery plans of the region, highlighting the implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework.

Speaking on the experiences of The Group of Latin America and Caribbean Countries, or GRULAC, Marcia Tambutti, a biodiversity expert at the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean,

shared examples of initiatives mainstreaming biodiversity in fisheries, vineyards, forestry, agriculture, tourism, and finance, which resulted in a return on investment in economic, social, and environmental terms.

United Kingdom Ambassador to the ASEAN Jon Lambe talked about the synergies among global commitments to protect nature in his keynote message, highlighting the importance of linking efforts to fight climate change and reverse biodiversity loss.

Meanwhile, Professor Emerita Dato’ Seri Dr. Mazlan Othman of the International Science Council of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific explained the importance of scenario building in exploring possibilities for the future and assessing present reactive and proactive actions. She talked about how the Sustainable Development Goals can be achieved through biodiversity and ecosystems, which at present have an estimated value of USD 33 trillion.

The conference was supported by the European Union through the BCAMP project, the Federal Government of Germany through KfW and GIZ, and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Singer and actress Maya Karin and Mr. Abdul Wahid Bin Abu Salim, deputy secretary-general of KeTSA, moderated the closing session.



ASEAN stars, environment advocates join ACB’s newest campaign for biodiversity



Joining the ACB’s campaign are celebrities in the ASEAN— Top left to right- H’Hen Nie, Paul Foster, Phuong Khanh, Mike Lewis, Angie Mead-King Bottom left to right- Kelly Tandiono, Alex Rendell, Antoinette Taus, Christian Bautista, and Katrina Kendall

On the International Day for Biological Diversity, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) launched its newest campaign dubbed as #WeAreASEANBiodiversity: Our Home, Our Lives, Our Stories as part of its efforts to amplify the call for wider participation in protecting biodiversity and humankind.

The campaign, in collaboration with Communities Organized for Resource Allocation or CORA led by its founder and UN Environment Programme National Goodwill Ambassador for the Philippines Antoinette Taus, highlights stories of hope in individual and collective actions that contribute to efforts to restore ecosystems and mainstream biodiversity into plans and programmes across sectors.

Apart from Taus, joining the campaign are actor and UNEP Goodwill Ambassador Alex Rendell, singer Christian Bautista; scientist and protected area ambassador Katrina Kendall, actor and model Mike Lewis, celebrity athlete Kelly Tandiono, actor and host Paul Foster; entrepreneur and farmer Angie Mead-King; Miss Earth 2018 Phuong Khanh; and Miss Universe Viet Nam 2017 H’Hen Nie.

A three-minute video, which premiered on the ACB’s Facebook page, celebrates ASEAN’s rich natural heritage, from its mountains, farmlands, rivers, and wetlands, and

issues the urgent call to “mend our broken relationship with nature”.

Among the many actions that individuals can do are planting native trees, regrowing forests, ending destructive fishing practices, and keeping the waters free from litter, the video said.

In her message, ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said that the ongoing crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impacts of climate change have further exposed how economic growth, public health, and our society’s resilience rely on healthy biodiversity and well-functioning ecosystems.

“The projections are grim most especially if we do not change our ways. But now, we are given the opportunity to reclaim this narrative,” Lim said.

The ACB chief was referring to the report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in 2019 that around one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades, more than ever before in human history.

She stressed that continuing biodiversity decline can increase the risks of new and emerging infectious diseases that have the

potential to become pandemics and reduce buffers against the impacts of climate change.

“The theme of this year’s celebrations ‘We’re part of the solution #ForNature’ calls for a much-needed shift from the prevailing mindset that humanity and biodiversity are separate. We are part of biodiversity and hence, we are part of the solutions”, Lim said.

Earl Paulo Diaz, head of the Communication and Public Affairs unit of the ACB, said online and offline activities have been lined up until 2023 as part of the campaign.

Among these initiatives are the fifth staging of the ASEAN-wide photo contest *Zooming in on Biodiversity*, the launch of *Biodiversitalks*, an online talk show that features people from all walks of life discussing relevant topics and issues around biodiversity and nature.

The ACB will also hold the second *ASEAN Biodiversity Heroes Awards* to recognise outstanding individuals from the ASEAN Member States who have made exemplary contributions to the safekeeping of the region’s natural resources.

Watch out for updates at <https://weare.aseanbiodiversity.org/>

ASEAN-UK joint event highlights nature's key role in climate action ahead of COP15 and COP26



Deputy Secretary-General for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Kung Phoak (left) and UK Ambassador to the Philippines Daniel Pruce (right) during the ASEAN-UK COP26: Framing the Future for Nature and Climate

On 8 June 2021, the UK COP26 Presidency and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) co-convoked ASEAN-UK COP 26: Framing the Future for Nature and Climate, a virtual event exploring the important role that ecosystems, like forests, wetlands, and marine and coastal areas, play in combatting climate change.

The event explored best practices and experiences from across the ASEAN region, and discussed the need to scale up ambition on nature-based solutions on climate and biodiversity. The event also showcased the findings of the Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity, and the applicability of its findings to the ASEAN region.

The event was also an opportunity to bring the region together in preparation for the upcoming regional and global meetings, including the 15th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP 26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, all taking place this year, with the UK presiding over COP 26, in partnership with Italy.

The event drew over 500 participants, who were welcomed with a video message from renowned naturalist Sir David Attenborough specific for South East Asia. Deputy Secretary-

General (DSG) for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Kung Phoak, UK Ambassador to the Philippines Daniel Pruce, and ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim opened the event. "Nature-based solutions play a very significant role in addressing the root causes of climate change, for instance, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions," DSG Kung Phoak said.

Dr. Lim explained that while the ASEAN region is among the most vulnerable to climate change, solutions are within its reach, considering its wealth of biological resources and diverse ecosystems.

"The integrity of these ecosystems contribute to adapting and mitigating strategies against the impacts of climate change — mangrove, peatland, and marine ecosystems help curb rising temperatures, avert disasters, and serve as carbon sinks as well," she said.

Ambassador Pruce emphasised the need to scale up nature-based solutions in ASEAN to curb global warming and build resilience to climate impacts, through ending deforestation, committing to protect 30 per cent of global land and ocean by 2030.

"Nature-based solutions are vital in safeguarding our climate, air, water and way of life for future

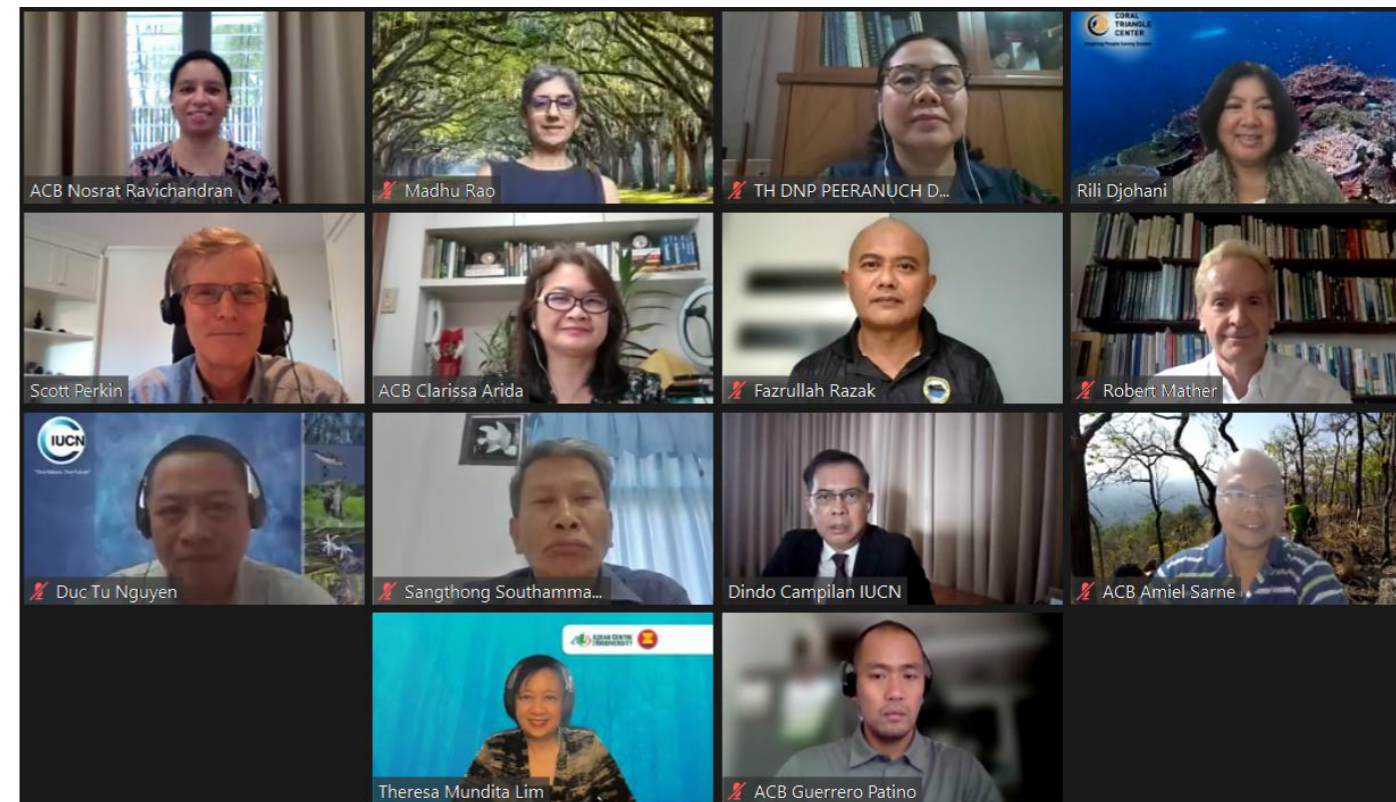
generations, the UK Ambassador said, citing that nature is a priority under the UK's Presidency of COP26. The event featured thematic sessions on protecting carbon sinks and nature's role in climate adaptation, reducing emissions from unsustainable exploitation of nature in the region, and financing nature-based solutions

The event also featured a special fireside chat between Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta and Demetrio L. Ignacio (Former ASOEN Chair of the Philippines), where Professor Dasgupta advised ASEAN policymakers on applying the findings of the Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity in an ASEAN context.

Representatives from Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Viet Nam shared reflections on the event and showcased the national actions they are taking in applying and scaling nature-based solutions.

The event closed with reflections from Mika Tan, Coordinator of the ASEAN Youth Biodiversity Programme; Dr. Nor Imtihan Binti Haji Abdul Razak, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Development, Brunei Darussalam; and Ken O'Flaherty, COP 26 Ambassador to Asia Pacific and South Asia.

Expansion not enough; experts look at quality of protected areas



The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), in collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), hosted a webinar on the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas in a bid to improve the effectiveness of the region's protected areas.

"Now more than ever, ensuring the quality and the effectiveness of the management of protected areas, as well as integrating biodiversity concerns across other sectors, public health, and socioeconomic concerns, need our urgent attention," ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said in her message.

She said monitoring the effectiveness and conservation outcomes is an ongoing endeavour in the ASEAN, especially as the region gears towards building resilience from emerging diseases and climate change risks.

The ASEAN Webinar on the IUCN Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas, which was held on 3 June 2021 via Zoom, was supported by the European Union, German Development Bank (KfW), and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH through the Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN Project, Small Grants Programme, and the Institutional Strengthening of Biodiversity Sector in the ASEAN II Project, respectively.

IUCN Regional Director for Asia, Dr. Dindo Campilan, emphasised that many protected and conserved areas are not yet being effectively and equitably managed, citing the findings of the UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre's Protected Planet report released last month.

"It is not just the quantity of protected and conserved areas

that matters; it is also the quality of their management and their governance," Campilan said.

The IUCN Green List, the first global standard of best practice for area-based conservation, is a programme of certification for protected and conserved areas — national parks, community conserved areas, nature reserves, ASEAN Heritage Parks and other areas — that are delivering successful conservation outcomes through effective management and fair governance.

While the IUCN Red List highlights the world's species in danger of extinction, the IUCN Green List recognises excellence in the management of protected and conserved areas around the world.

In Asia, interest in the IUCN Green List process is growing rapidly, according to Dr. Scott Perkin of the IUCN Asia Regional Office. Green List processes are currently

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Why invest in nature: Economists, policymakers in ASEAN weigh in

The Economics of Biodiversity:
The Dasgupta Review

27 APRIL 2021 | 3:00-4:45 (GMT+8)



Governments and businesses are called upon to think big and invest in greening projects that will not just bring employment opportunities but also productivity gains.

In a video message in a webinar recently organised by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta stressed that humanity is not external to the environment, which is a natural asset on which economies, livelihoods, and well-being depend.

Dasgupta is the lead of the *Dasgupta Review*, an independent global report on the economics of biodiversity commissioned by the UK Treasury. "The lens with which our institutions see their societies is one which does not notice nature," he said.

Gathering economists and policymakers in the ASEAN region, the first session of the *Webinar Series on the Economics of Biodiversity: Dasgupta Review* was conducted on 27 April 2021 via Zoom, in cooperation with the European Union, German Development Bank (KfW), and *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) GmbH, through the project *Biodiversity Conservation and*

Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN, Small Grants Programme, and the Institutional Strengthening of Biodiversity Sector in the ASEAN II Project, respectively.

Drawing at least 200 participants, the webinar tapped a panel composed of senior officials from the finance and economic development ministries of ASEAN Member States and economic experts in the region. It was moderated by Dr. Cielito Habito, former socioeconomic planning secretary of the Philippines

In the panel were Dr. Pham Khanh Nam, director of the Economy and Environment Partnership for Southeast Asia; former Department of Environment and Natural Resources Undersecretary Demetrio Ignacio, Jr.; Albay Representative Joey Salceda; and Paul Steele, chief economist of the International Institute for Environment and Development.

'Nature at the centre'

In her opening remarks, ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said the webinar was aimed at identifying actions from the recommendations of the Dasgupta Review, relevant to the region, and why and how the business and finance sectors and government

agencies must consider placing nature as part and parcel of their investment paradigm.

"The Dasgupta Review presents stirring assessments that provide solid bases for biodiversity mainstreaming across sectors. Integrating natural capital is crucial to doing business responsibly, both in the government and the private sectors, especially as we move beyond business as usual towards a better normal," she said.

Meanwhile, Deputy Secretary-General for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Kung Phoak said the ASEAN strongly supports initiatives that put a premium on the region's rich biodiversity and natural capital and further promote nature-based solutions.

The ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, in particular, highlighted the need to put a spotlight on preserving the region's natural capital as the region's gears for recovery, he said.

Also gracing the online event, United Kingdom Ambassador to the ASEAN Jon Lambe stressed that "protecting nature carries real economic benefits and losing biodiversity carries real economic costs."

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While the ASEAN region is one of the most biologically and culturally diverse regions with 18 per cent of the world's species, it is also projected to be one of the fastest-growing economies in the world.

Lim shared that with recognition of the underpinning role of nature and biodiversity in the economy, the ASEAN region is working on integrating natural capital in the national statistical system. Among the region's recent activity supported by the Enhanced Regional EU-ASEAN Dialogue Instrument is the assessment of natural capital policy and practice in ASEAN public and private sectors.

Internalise costs

Rep. Salceda, the former co-chair of the UN Green Climate Fund, said the Dasgupta Review strengthens the case for internalising the costs and returns to nature.

"Earnest accounting of the cost to nature will involve a change in macroeconomic models. Output,

as measured by the gross domestic product, does not account for the destruction of the asset base... There should be some way to measure nature as an intergenerational wealth that can be exhausted or destroyed if overexploited," he said.

Rep. Salceda, the former governor of Albay province in the Philippines, also shared that his province has not earned gains from producing clean energy in the country due to the lack of a national mechanism for cap and trade. He further expressed that a programme that aims to limit, or cap, the total level of emissions of certain chemicals, particularly carbon dioxide, as a result of industrial activity would be beneficial for greening initiatives as that of Albay's.

Meanwhile, Ignacio Jr. highlighted the need to build "a strong local constituency for biodiversity" to fuel change.

"At the local level, where people are closer to nature, it is important that they know and feel how they

affect nature and how nature affects them," he said.

The Dasgupta Review provided broad transitions towards sustainable pathways, such as addressing excessive demand for goods and services that strained nature's capacity to supply, changing measures of economic success, and including nature's assets in the definition of 'wealth,' and institutional transformation in the finance and education systems.

One of the discussants, Dr. Pham Khanh Nam, shared that to balance the demand for goods and the supply, governments must consider boosting the resilience of the production system and shifting to high-technology and ecologically based farming systems.

Community leads in protecting flying foxes, hornbills, waterbirds in Tawi-Tawi, Philippines



During the conduct of migratory waterbird surveys at Tawi-Tawi Group of Islands. Photo courtesy of Godfrey Jakosalem

Searching for Sulu hornbills, a group of community rangers called TAWSI (Tawi-Tawi Advocates for Wildlife Support Initiative of Panglima) traversed the muddy and treacherous road of Panglima Sugala, Tawi-Tawi, Philippines. At some point, they towed their truck and began tirelessly trekking 19 kilometres up to its deep thick forest.

Soon after, their efforts paid off. They found an active nest, which serves about five Sulu hornbills or *Tawsi* as the people of Tawi-Tawi call them in their vernacular.

Sulu hornbills, which are endemic in the Sulu archipelago, are considered one of the world's most critically endangered species with less than 50 individuals.

Using their cameras and GPS-equipped phones, the community rangers immediately sent a report to

Philippines Biodiversity Conservation Foundation, Inc. (PhilBio).

The rich biodiversity and ecosystems of Tawi-Tawi have gained attention from concerned organisations and groups aiming for biodiversity conservation on the island. Aside from being the home of the Sulu hornbills, other threatened species, such as flying foxes, Christmas Frigatebird, Far Eastern Curlew, and Great Knot are also found on the island.

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) is supporting the project *Community-based Biodiversity Conservation in the Tawi-Tawi Group of Islands* of PhilBio that aims to strengthen the capacity of community members on biodiversity research and monitoring of Sulu hornbill and other threatened forest birds and establish baseline information on migratory birds, flying foxes, and their habitats

on the island. The collaboration commenced last year but was only formally launched online in April due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Community-led

In her presentation at the online launch, Lisa Paguntalan, executive director of PhilBio, said preliminary monitoring activities of the community were conducted between October to November 2020.

"The results came out good and acceptable," she said. As she described the monitoring activities under the COVID-19 new normal, she shared some of the challenges faced by the team, such as knowledge gaps in identifying certain species.

The Tawi-Tawi biodiversity conservation project is community-led. At its core is multi-stakeholder collaboration, which creates a

platform that gives value to both local and scientific knowledge.

"We believe that the community's active involvement, matched with their local knowledge and lived experiences could best serve the project, whose benefit will also redound to the community", ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said.

Other partners of PhilBio in the project are the local government unit of Panglima Sugala, which supports the 26 TAWSI rangers; Ministry of Environment Natural Resources and Energy, Philippine Marine Corps, North Carolina Zoo; Asian Species Action Partnership; and the Oriental Bird Club.

Three active nests of Sulu hornbills were discovered in Panglima Sugala. Other threatened species that were recorded include the critically endangered Blue-winged Racquet-tail, Sulu pygmy woodpecker and Black-billed hanging parrot, Philippine slow loris, the underscribed Sulu warty pig, and pit viper.

Fifty-seven waterbird species, including the critically endangered Christmas frigatebird, endangered Far Eastern curlew and Great knot, vulnerable Chinese egret, and near-threatened Malay plover, were identified in the initial report.

Three roosting sites of flying foxes, on the other hand, were confirmed

in the municipalities of Bongao and Panglima Sugala.

Common Island flying fox and large flying fox were the two species commonly found in the three roosting sites while the critically endangered Golden-crowned flying fox was only found in the Bongao roost within a human settlement.

ASEAN connection

The Tawi-Tawi Group of Islands is part of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. The area borders two biogeographical zones that host unique, genetically connected sets of wildlife, Lim said.

"It is important to narrow the knowledge gaps and increase understanding on species distribution, movement, and likely local migration between Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia (Borneo)," she added.

Lim cited a study conducted by Juan Carlos Gonzalez, a University of the Philippines professor, in 2013 that showed strong evidence of the genetic interconnection of hornbills in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Studies say that the genetic ancestry of the Philippine hornbill assemblage (*Buceros*, *Anthracoceros*, *Aceros*, *Penelopides*) can be traced back to Sundaland. These birds were believed to have crossed multiple biogeographic barriers, such as Huxley's line, a zoogeographic

boundary placing Palawan and Borneo together; Wallace's line between the Asian and Australian faunal regions to Sulawesi; the Moluccan Islands (Wallacea); and Lydekker's line, which runs along the border of Australia's continental shelf, to Melanesia, a subregion of Oceania.

"As we deepen our understanding of the ecology of these species, we will also get to appreciate their importance and strengthen efforts to conserve the remaining population of these critically endangered species such as the Sulu hornbill," Lim explained.

Next steps

Lim expressed hope that, with this project, the platform, methodologies, particularly those that apply community participation and citizen science, in the ASEAN, can be highlighted, and learning experiences can be shared across the Region on its implementation.

Assessment results may encourage research partnerships and collaborations and help share conservation strategies, including mainstreaming of biodiversity, into local policies and development plans.

Paguntalan said PhilBio will continue assisting the monitoring and community-based education and awareness activities in Tawi-Tawi. She also recommended continued support for TAWSI rangers and rehabilitation of logged areas.



Photos of the TAWSI Rangers during the first bird monitoring activity (22-23 October 2020) Photo courtesy of TAWSI rangers

Why accounting natural capital is important to economies?



What would be the value of a nation's economy if the contributions of nature are properly measured?

A holistic appreciation and accounting of the values of ecosystems and their services are integral in effectively managing wealth and resources for the sustainable growth of economies to benefit the people, a webinar organised by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) last week told participants.

The ACB held the third part of the webinar series on the economics of biodiversity on 23 June 2021, focusing on natural capital accounting and existing standards that include indicators on the economic values of the flow of ecosystem services and goods.

This webinar series is being supported by the European Union, German Development Bank (KfW), and *Deutsche Gesellschaft für*

Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, through the *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN Project*, Small Grants Programme, and the Institutional Strengthening of Biodiversity Sector in the ASEAN II Project, respectively.

"Natural capital accounting is a necessary step towards the creation of inclusive wealth accounts. It enables us to understand and appreciate the place of nature's services in our economies, including the services that are usually overlooked, most especially life support assets that include water supply, fish stocks, carbon sequestration, and other ecosystem services," ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said in her opening remarks.

With Dr. Lim in welcoming the participants were Dr. Nor Imthani Binti Haji Abdul Razak, permanent secretary for planning, land use, and environment of Brunei Darussalam's

Ministry of Development, and chair of the ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment, and Dr. David Tantow, counsellor for development cooperation of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Jakarta.

Dr. Nor shared that the government of Brunei Darussalam is paying close attention to widening the coverage of its mangroves and peat swamp forests as it develops its national biodiversity strategies and plans.

"Maintaining this biodiversity... increases new economic opportunities ranging from timber, pharmaceuticals, as well as ecotourism," she said, noting that every decision made for development requires consideration for nature and biological resources.

The webinar gave participants a brief overview of the UN System of Environment-Economic Accounts-Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA-EA), which constitutes an integrated and

comprehensive statistical framework for organising data about habitats and landscapes, measuring the ecosystem services, tracking changes in ecosystem assets, and linking this information to economic and other human activities. This was adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2021.

Several countries are compiling data and piloting SEEA, according to the 2020 global assessment for environmental-economic accounting. Alessandra Alfieri, chief of the Environmental-Economic Accounts Section of the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs noted the six ASEAN Member States already engaged in SEEA: Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

In the Philippines, among the current initiatives are updating of environmental accounts and statistics as well as compiling of environment and natural resources accounts in the Pilot Regions.

These data help the country measure sustainability in tourism, ocean economy, greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, disaster expenditure, and material flow, supporting environment indicators under the Sustainable Development

Agenda for 2030, Assistant National Statistician of the Philippine Statistics Authority Vivian Ilarina said.

Dr. Gem B. Castillo, president of the Resource and Environmental Economics Foundation of the Philippines and national consultant of the Wealth Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES) noted that there was a significant achievement in bringing together data and identifying data gaps and deficiencies in the information system of the Philippines.

Like in the Philippines, SEEA efforts in Indonesia started in 1990 and continued up to the present.

It started with a compilation of an integrated system of environmental-economic accounting, SISNERLING (*Sistem Terintegrasi Neraca Ekonomi dan Lingkungan*), followed by sectoral applications, the latest of which is on sustainable tourism.

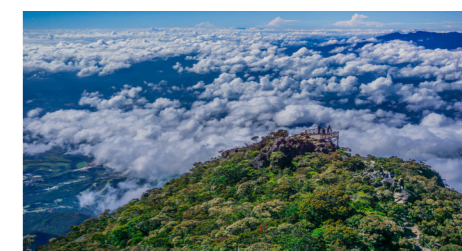
In her presentation, Etjih Tasriah, senior statistician of Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS-Statistics) of Indonesia, shared that SISNERLING sought to describe the impacts of economic development on the availability of natural resources and the roles

of natural resources in economic activities. The government has been conducting in-depth studies on SEEA in 17 provinces of Indonesia every year since 2016.

Experts from the Philippines and Indonesia cited the need for strong commitment from officials and concerted efforts from several sectors to manage and monitor the natural accounting processes and make sure these are integrated in decision-making.

With the post-2020 global biodiversity framework expected to be finalised at the 15th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity this year, the adoption and implementation of natural capital accounting systems are even more crucial.

The webinar was moderated by Dr. Glenn-Marie Lange, former manager of the World Bank's Global Partnership for WAVES.



ACB, Embassy of Republic of Korea explore partnership in tackling marine debris



A clean-up vessel, which will be donated by the Korean government under the KOICA project, is projected to arrive in the Philippines late next year. Photo courtesy of Korea Marine Environment Management Corporation

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the Philippines are exploring possible areas for collaboration, including raising awareness on the issue of coastal and marine conservation in the Philippines where marine plastic pollution is causing environmental damage and posing health risks.

At present, the Korean government's development cooperation agency Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has launched a marine litter management programme in the Philippines in

partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Philippines Coast Guard. The multi-year assistance from 2021 to 2025 is focused on establishing a marine litter monitoring system, stationing a clean-up vessel near Manila Bay, and enhancing marine litter management capacity in the Philippines.

"Korea is glad to be contributing to the marine environmental protection in the Philippines, a country widely known for its beautiful coral reefs and aquatic biodiversity. Korea hopes that the

marine litter management assistance will help mitigate risks posed by the increasing marine debris problem that many experts claim is undermining the marine landscape of the Philippine archipelago", said Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the Philippines In-chul Kim.

A clean-up vessel, which will be donated by the Korean government under the KOICA project, is projected to arrive in the Philippines late next year tentatively upon completion of necessary procurement procedures. The clean-up vessel will be the first marine

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vessel dedicated to collect marine litter in the Philippines.

DENR notes that there is evident presence of marine litters or plastics floating at the Manila Bay, exacerbated during the Habagat Season (Wet Season) or strong typhoons, that are washed ashore. Meanwhile, as the World Bank Group published in March 2021, more than 75 per cent of the material value of the plastics, equivalent to USD 6 billion per year, is lost across three countries of Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand due to absence of recycling. Under a partnership between the Korean government and the World Bank Group, the World Bank's study on the Philippines was funded by the Korea Green Growth Trust Fund (KGGTF) in efforts to support the mainstreaming of green growth through the World Bank's lending operations.

"Korea will continue to take part in the global efforts to address environmental issues through various multilateral and bilateral cooperation, ranging from hosting the upcoming 2021 P4G Summit and collaborating with various UN agencies and international organisations to bilateral development cooperation with the Philippines on the protection of marine environment and biodiversity", said Ambassador Kim.

Korea hosted the Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals (P4G) 2030 Summit from 30 to 31 May 2021 in Seoul, uniting heads of states, CEOs, investors, and civil society leaders. The Korean government has also been in close cooperation with various other international organisations to contribute to the preservation of marine environment in the region.

ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said these possible partnerships with Korea on marine litter management would be aligned with the priorities of the ASEAN, under the ASEAN Working Group on Coastal and Marine Environment.

"The ASEAN Member States have pledged to reduce and prevent marine debris as part of their commitments under the Bangkok Declaration on Combatting Marine Debris in the ASEAN Region. The Region recognises that marine pollution is a trans-boundary issue that requires integrated regional cooperation", Lim said.

She emphasised that pollution is one of the threats to marine biodiversity as thousands of animals are killed after ingesting or getting entangled in plastic products. The deterioration of ecosystems because of these wastes pose tangible and negative impacts on the people's health and livelihoods.

Tackling the issue of marine debris is highly relevant today because of the growing concerns over the volumes of medical wastes generated by the COVID-19 pandemic response and the fear that some of these may end up in waterways and oceans.

In a study published by ScienceDirect in September 2020, the average number of face masks used in 49 Asian countries in a day as of 31 July 2020 was estimated at 2.2 billion.

"Innovative actions in properly disposing and managing wastes, including those generated by the pandemic response, will help reduce marine litter that affects the health of our marine ecosystems and the capacity of our oceans to provide

fisheries and food security, as well as to effectively serve as one of our natural solutions to climate change impacts", Lim added.

The ACB is set to conduct a study aimed at identifying entry points for regional action, such as support for cooperation for research and assessments, which may help in protecting and recovering marine biodiversity threatened by marine litter.

Lim likewise noted that Korea's continued efforts and leadership in green growth may be synchronised with the ACB's efforts to mainstream biodiversity into various sectors, including infrastructure and energy.

For more than a decade, Korea has been promoting policies focused on green growth, a development paradigm that creates a growth engine and job creation based on "green technology and clean energy." Korea's Green New Deal, announced last year, further elaborates on the areas of focus as the promotion of green transition of infrastructures, low-carbon and decentralised energy and innovation in the green industry.

"We hope more businesses through the help of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea will be our partners in our endeavor of integrating biodiversity considerations into plans and business models," she said.



Rethinking the value of biodiversity to restore the Earth



The recent launch of the global report *Economics of Biodiversity: Dasgupta Review* has revived discussions around the question: “How does one live a sustainable life and help restore the Earth?” These conversations come at a timely opportunity in the 22 April celebration of Earth Day. With the report asserting that “our economies are embedded within nature, not external to it,” economic and environmental experts alike are now compelled to think about sustainable ways forward for people, the planet, and profit.

In line with this, the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) initiated a webinar series on Conservation Financing. The first session of the webinar series, Introduction to Economics of Biodiversity and Conservation Finance, was held virtually on 7 April.

ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim, in her welcome

remarks, pressed that essential services, such as water, clean air, flood mitigation and food supply, are provided by healthy ecosystems. “Being able to value these contributions will present an even better case why one should pay closer attention to our high biodiversity areas such as our protected areas and ASEAN Heritage Parks, and invest in them,” she said.

The region’s protected areas, especially the ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs), play a vital role in sustaining natural capital and the accompanying ecosystem services that provide the needed raw materials for most industries that drive the region’s economy. However, the effective and sustainable management of these critical areas is hindered by insufficient financing.

Executive Director of the Conservation Finance Alliance David Meyers discussed the

different funding tools available for conservation, defining conservation finance as “mechanisms and strategies that generate, manage, and deploy financial resources and align incentives to achieve nature conservation outcomes.” To increase capital for conservation and bridge the USD 316 billion annual biodiversity finance gap, Meyers shared seven finance mechanisms: Return-Based Investments, Economic Instruments, Grants and Other Transfers, Business and Markets, Public Financial Management, Risk Management, and Financial Efficiency.

The *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN* (BCAMP) Project of the ACB and the EU supports the ASEAN Member States (AMS) in reducing biodiversity loss.

This persistent gap in financing for the protection and management of protected areas led to the ongoing study on conservation financing for five AHPs under the BCAMP funding support. Two of the researchers on conservation financing shared preliminary results for the Eastern Forest Complex in Thailand and the Virachey National Park in Cambodia.

In Cambodia, Virachey National Park, at its current area of 332,500 hectares, has an approximate 115,030,970 (MgC) tons of carbon stored in its vast array of forest ecosystems potentially be counted as carbon credits. This, according to Dr. Chou Phanith, may be adequate to finance biodiversity conservation and livelihoods in the national park.

Meanwhile, in the Eastern Forest Complex of Thailand, the environmental impacts of the proposed flooding of the Ang Rue Nai Wildlife sanctuary for water supply threaten critical elephant habitat. It was shared during the virtual session how the bid to restore the complex’s ecosystem can significantly reduce the risks for both elephants and humans.

Green investments sought in COVID-19 recovery



The pervading norm — to purchase, consume, and discard — in a seeming rat race, along with other business-as-usual practices, has overstretched the planet’s natural resources. Experts are calling for drastic changes in the way people consume and produce to ensure humanity’s survival.

Sustainable consumption took the spotlight in a webinar organised by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) held on 11 June 2021, where experts in the region and representatives of planning and economic ministries of the ASEAN Member States (AMS) convened to exchange experiences in sustainable consumption and production as well as in green growth amid the COVID-19 recovery efforts.

Opening the webinar, ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said that while sustainable consumption and production are not new to the ASEAN, there is more to be done.

“The business sector continues to be pivotal, given its hand in managing supply chains. Ensuring that raw materials used for manufacturing are sustainably, legitimately, and equitably sourced are just some ways the private sector can help maintain a harmonious relationship with nature,” Lim said, likewise citing the commitment of the ASEAN leaders in strengthening cooperation on sustainable consumption and production.

Dr. Orapan Nabangchang of the Economy and Environment Partnership for Southeast Asia explained that ecosystems degrade

when we extract provisioning services at a rate that exceeds its regenerative rate.

“The world was unprepared for the pandemic, but biodiversity loss has sent us warnings to which we haven’t paid much attention,” she said.

Joining Dr. Nabangchang in the panel were Dr. Michikazu Kojima, research fellow of the Regional Knowledge Centre for Marine Plastic Debris of the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN; and Dr. Helena Varkkey of the University of Malaya in Malaysia.

The webinar held on Zoom was the second installment of the series of online discussions on the economics of biodiversity supported by the European Union, German Development Bank (KfW), and *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) GmbH through the *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN Project, Small Grants Programme*, and the *Institutional Strengthening of Biodiversity Sector in the ASEAN II Project*, respectively.

The webinar series sought to explore the recommendations of the recently released Dasgupta Review on the Economics of Biodiversity, an independent global review of the relationship between economics and biodiversity.

COVID-19 impacts on plastic use, haze

Dr. Kojima pointed out the impacts of the spillover of plastic wastes to marine ecosystems observed in the ASEAN region. For example, he said, there were reports about whales, turtles, dugong, dolphins, sharks, and other marine species dying after getting entangled in fishing nets or having ingested plastics.

“Although (lockdowns and mobility restrictions) have likely reduced the generation of plastic wastes, plastic pollution continues during the pandemic,” he said.

Dr. Kojima explained that due to lockdowns, the generation of industrial waste and office waste declined. Travel restrictions likewise reduced inbound tourists and the waste generated in tourist sites.

On the other hand, however, he stressed that the increase in the use of Personal Protection Equipment, including masks and gloves amid the pandemic, along with price drop of plastic materials due to the rollback of oil prices, may contribute to the widespread use of plastics.

“We should ensure that the leakage of plastic to the environment should be minimised, and these wastes should be collected and properly managed,” he said.

Sharing the findings of her recent study on the haze and the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Varkkey said that people living in areas with higher air pollution, both in the short- and long-term, are at higher risk of deaths related to the COVID-19.

“There is a concern that haze particles can act as vectors of the disease, putting Southeast Asian communities at increased risk,” she said.

Even though weather trends show that a prolonged dry season is unlikely this year, she said observers note that COVID-19 restrictions, stretched government budgets, and economic pressure may result in more fires on the ground.

“To avoid future pandemics, land-use change in tropical peatlands, which risk being the site of novel zoonotic infectious diseases, must be carefully controlled or halted,” she said.

Action plans

Meanwhile, the panel discussion of senior economic planning officials in the AMS was joined by Ms. Siti Khadijah Abd Gani, principal assistant secretary of Malaysia’s Division of Biodiversity Management

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under the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources; Assistant Director of the Philippines' National Economic and Development Authority Diane Gail Maharjan, and Dr. Tanit Changthavorn, deputy director-general of Thailand's Biodiversity-Based Economy Development Office.

Maharjan said the Philippines, even before the pandemic, has developed the Philippine Action Plan for Sustainable Consumption and Production to facilitate green recovery and influences sustainable behaviour and practices. The action

plan operationalises the Philippines' medium-term plan and responds to the country's commitments to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

"The plan aims to have more Filipinos produce and consume green goods and services to accelerate the shift towards sustainable and climate-smart lifestyles and practices," Maharjan said.

Dr. Changthavorn, meanwhile, discussed Thailand's Bio-Circular-

Green economy model, a sustainable and inclusive approach for socio-economic development in the post-COVID-19 era.

In this session, Ms. Loraine Gatlabayan of Southeast Asia SWITCH-Asia Sustainable Consumption and Production Facility likewise shared insights and updates on the EU-supported regional programme providing assistance to governments in improving their national strategies and action plans on sustainable production and consumption practices.

Expansion not enough; experts look at quality of protected areas ...continued from page 5

underway in Bhutan, China, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, and Viet Nam. Asia already has 10 Green Listed sites and at least 25 more sites are formally engaged in the process.

The 240+ participants, many of whom were protected area authorities, experts, and representatives from the ASEAN Member States, were given a walkthrough of the Green List, including its indicators and procedures.

Representatives from Viet Nam and Malaysia also shared their experiences of Green Listing process.

In the case of Viet Nam's first Green List site, Van Long Nature Reserve, Nguyen Duc Tu of IUCN Viet Nam said the Green List process had been very useful in identifying gaps and implementing action plans according to international standards.

Van Long Nature Reserve, a lowland inland wetland located in northern Viet Nam, supports the world's largest population of Critically Endangered Delacour's langur (*Trachypithecus delacouri*).

Dr. Madhu Rao, a member of the IUCN Green List Management Committee, stressed that achieving the biodiversity targets in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework will require protected and conserved areas to be more ecologically representative and to cover areas important for biodiversity.

"Expansion is not enough. Existing and new areas need to be effectively managed and located in the right places," she said,

explaining the quality elements of protected and conserved areas. Dr. Lim likewise said lessons and insights from the Green Listing process will significantly contribute toward efforts to achieve one of the proposed goals under the post-2020 global biodiversity framework—to enhance the connectivity and integrity of natural systems that will be made part of the protected areas system.