

# 2021 ASEAN JOINT STATEMENT TO THE 15TH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

*Adopted on 11 October 2021*

**WE**, the Peoples of Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), Malaysia, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Singapore, the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), on the occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD);

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the wealth of biodiversity in Southeast Asia, which comprises almost twenty per cent of the world's biodiversity, even as it holds only three per cent of its land area, and that three countries in the region – Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines – are recognised as megadiverse countries, while Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam make up a large part of the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot, making Southeast Asia one of the most biologically important regions on the planet;

**RECALLING** our commitment and actions taken to realise the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular, goals that relate to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems, and the 2018 Sharm El-Sheikh Declaration on Investing in Biodiversity for People and Planet on Biodiversity Mainstreaming to work at all levels within governments and across all sectors to mainstream biodiversity;

**REAFFIRMING** ASEAN's commitment to realise the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the implementation of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025; and the Declaration on ASEAN Post-2015 Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Agenda in relation to the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources; and the 2019 ASEAN Leaders' Vision Statement on Partnership for Sustainability in which ASEAN agreed to continue to promote biodiversity conservation and management, and endeavour to mainstream biodiversity into the various development processes in ASEAN, with the support of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB);

**ALSO RECALLING** the 2003 ASEAN Declaration on Heritage Parks, which aims to conserve certain national protected areas of ASEAN Member States (AMS) that deserve the highest recognition for their outstanding values and importance as conservation areas to be appreciated regionally and internationally;

**WELCOMING** the recommendations of the Sixth ASEAN Heritage Parks Conference held on 21-24 October 2019 in Pakse City, Lao PDR, and the Third ASEAN Conference on Biodiversity, with the theme, "Towards 2050: Living in Harmony with Nature", which was held from October 2020-2021 through a series of virtual webinars, and emphasised the need to take transformative actions in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework;

**RECALLING FURTHER** the 2019 Chiang Mai Statement of ASEAN Ministers Responsible for CITES and Wildlife Enforcement on Illegal Wildlife Trade, and reaffirming ASEAN's commitment to strengthen cooperation in addressing illegal wildlife trade in the region in compliance with global and regional wildlife trade policy, demand reduction, law enforcement, and wildlife cybercrime;

**REITERATING** the concern of the ASEAN region on marine debris that impacts marine and coastal ecosystems and biodiversity, and emphasising the collective actions being taken by the ASEAN Member States, consistent with the Bangkok Declaration on Combating Marine Debris in accordance with the ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris;

**NOTING** the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* and the Convention on Biological Diversity's *Global Biodiversity Outlook 5* highlighted the urgent need for transformative actions to address the biodiversity crisis;

**ALSO NOTING** that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change *Special Report on Climate Change and Land*, the *Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*, and the *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C* highlighted climate change impacts and risks to ecosystems and biodiversity, and called for ambitious mitigation targets and holistic adaptation measures, including ecosystem-based adaptation;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** that the years 2021 to 2030 constitute the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, which is a rallying call for the protection and revival of ecosystems all around the world, to halt their degradation and restore them to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda;

**RECOGNISING** that biodiversity and associated ecosystem services provide a multitude of opportunities for livelihood and economic development, contribute to poverty alleviation, technology and innovation, and serve as an effective adaptation and mitigation measure against climate change impacts and natural disasters in the region, and acknowledge that the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is an inter-generational responsibility that is entrusted to the present generation;

**ALSO RECOGNISING** the unique vulnerability of coral reefs to anthropogenic impacts, including global threats from climate change and ocean acidification, as well as local impacts, such as land- and sea-based pollution, overfishing and destructive fishing practices, as well as input of nutrients and sediments from agriculture;

**UNDERLINING** the importance of scaling up actions on ecosystem-based adaptation and mitigation measures in support of global climate efforts under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and recognising that nature-based solutions can play an important role in this regard;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the role of the ACB in facilitating cooperation among the AMS in achieving the objectives of the CBD on the conservation, sustainable use of biodiversity, and benefit-sharing in the ASEAN region;

**NOTING** the IPBES *Workshop Report on Biodiversity and Pandemics* which demonstrated that the risk of pandemics is being driven by increasing anthropogenic changes, such as land-use change, agricultural expansion and intensification, wildlife trade and consumption; and further noting that the World Health Organization recognises that most emerging infectious diseases, and almost all recent pandemics originate in wildlife, and there is evidence that increasing human pressure on the natural environment is driving disease emergence;

**ALSO NOTING** the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework and its Implementation Plan as the exit strategy from the COVID-19 crisis, which outlines five broad strategies, among which is advancing towards a more sustainable and resilient future through the promotion of nature-based solutions to increase the region's resilience against future pandemics; and the need for cross-sectoral coordination and a whole-of-community approach;

**REALISING** that the alarming rise of zoonotic, and new and emerging infectious diseases such as COVID-19, SARS, and MERS has helped raise awareness on the links between biodiversity and human health, which underlines the importance for ASEAN to conserve our habitats and strengthen measures in addressing illegal wildlife trade and the local consumption of wildlife, as well as the mainstreaming of biodiversity into the health and infrastructure sectors to identify responses to these diseases with the purpose of minimising the risk of disease spillover events that may give rise to future pandemics;

**WELCOMING** the theme of the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 15), “Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth”; and progress towards the finalisation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and the long-term strategic approach to mainstreaming;

DO HEREBY AGREE TO:

**INTENSIFY** regional efforts on protected areas, in particular, to improve the management effectiveness of ASEAN Heritage Parks, through research, technology transfer, innovation, capacity enhancement, and the adoption of sustainable financing strategies;

**STRENGTHEN** regional cooperation to halt species extinctions and protect priority species populations in the ASEAN region;

**COOPERATE** to identify, protect, and manage important ecosystems, such as forests and wetlands, to ensure continued provision of ecosystem services, such as water security;

**ENCOURAGE** efforts on the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal ecosystems, including an integrated land-to-sea approach to prevent and reduce marine debris in the ASEAN region;

**ENHANCE** cooperation on restoring habitats and ecosystems for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity while improving community livelihoods and the maintenance of vital ecosystems;

**STRENGTHEN** institutional arrangements, including through transboundary cooperation to improve governance and effective operationalisation of multilateral agreements and frameworks, and eliminate threats stemming from unsustainable and illegal exploitation of biodiversity;

AND CALL UPON CBD PARTIES AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS TO:

**DEVELOP** a realistic post-2020 global biodiversity framework to achieve the 2050 Vision of “Living in Harmony with Nature” and undertake transformative actions, including but not limited to:

- Conserving and restoring prioritised ecosystems with strong actions curbing species extinctions, improving management effectiveness of protected areas, and promoting sustainable use, and securing the fair and equitable benefit-sharing from the utilisation of genetic resources;
- Mainstreaming biodiversity across various development sectors, including but not limited to, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, mining, water, manufacturing, infrastructure and tourism to address the drivers of biodiversity loss and apply best practices on sustainable use;
- Promoting human well-being through the sustainable use and management of ecosystems for the continued provision of ecosystem services, including through ecosystem-based approaches, nature-based solutions, as well as participatory, indigenous and community-based conservation practices;
- Strengthening measures to address current and future pandemics – in particular, activities that drive biodiversity loss and reduce pandemic risk – and integrating the “One Health” approach;

- Enhancing implementation of their committed climate change mitigation actions at the national and sub-national levels in accordance with their respective capabilities and national circumstances, as well as their adaptation efforts, by implementing, among others, ecosystem-based approaches and nature-based solutions to protect livelihoods and communities at risk, and the most vulnerable;
- Scaling up actions and providing new and adequate financial resources, capacity building support, and appropriate technology transfer to developing countries for the full implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and the post-2020 global biodiversity framework;
- Improving communication, public education, awareness, public participation, and engagement, and coordination among various development sectors, such as finance and planning agencies, the private sector, and other stakeholders, including women and the youth, to support regional, sub-regional and national coordinated efforts in the implementation of biodiversity programmes;
- Promoting and supporting capacity enhancement on technology assessment and research on new and emerging issues;
- Pursuing policies that embed processes and outcomes for transformative change; and
- Synergising efforts to implement the SDG targets and relevant multilateral environment agreements, while strengthening the latter's institutional arrangements and aligning them with the targets and measurable indicators under the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

**ADOPTED** on the Eleventh Day of October in the Year Two Thousand and Twenty-one.