



OPENING REMARKS BY GUEST OF HONOR
AT THE 7TH HEART OF BORNEO TRILATERAL MEETING 4 – 5 SEPTEMBER 2013, BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Bismillah Hir Rahman Nirrahim

Distinguished Heads of Delegations from Indonesia and Malaysia, our colleague from wwf, ADB, HoB's partners, friends, senior officers, colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalam....wbh.

Firstly of all let me welcome our honourable guests to Brunei Darussalam. Alhamdulillah we are able to be here today for the opening of the 7th Heart of Borneo Trilateral Meeting. I do hope that our delegates will be able to experience the 1.6% of the green Heart of Borneo.

It is indeed a pleasure for Brunei Darussalam to host the 7th Heart of Borneo Trilateral Meeting followed by the 2nd Heart of Borneo Ministerial Meeting. It is our responsibility to keep the heart beating. Deforestation has shown a devastating impact to the world. Many countries experience extensive flooding, land slides and many other such disasters. Now we experience climate change, which confuses the farmers, confuses the insects, confuses the animals and also confuses the plants. It is difficult to predict flowering season and fruiting seasons.

And I do hope our effort to conserve the Heart of Borneo will have some significant impact to the environment and climate for the benefit to the generation to come.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Last night over dinner, we already discussed our agenda and we also touch on our way forward. It is important that the Heart of Borneo to be better known to the world to get support and technical assistance. A lot of opportunity for the Heart of Borneo to grow, through partnership.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Since the HoB Declaration in 2007, Brunei Darussalam has made significant progress especially in strengthening the conservation policy whereby more forest areas have been set aside for conservation purposes. The gazetted forest reserve designated for timber production p has been declared for conservation that brings up the percentage of conservation forest reserve in Brunei Darussalam to 41% of the total forest cover (i.e. 76%) and these areas are within the designated Brunei HoB management regime.

The figure will be expected to increase in the next years to come as we intend to include the world's remnant ecologically unique peat swamp forest in oil-rich Belait District. Joint studies have been conducted under Brunei HoB Initiative especially on its importance as a source of carbon stock and potential ecotourism destination in the country. A few peat bogs found in Brunei Darussalam have a higher value for conservation purposes.

Brunei Darussalam have also identified and declared a conservation forest called the Sungai Ingei Conservation Forest has a common border with Mulu National Park in Sarawak, Malaysia.

The Mendaram Peat conservation area is at the Sarawak border and share the peat dome. We need to strengthen our network and cooperation.

Such joint efforts are most welcome as the nation's forest area is very limited in terms of size and in view of its small area it's highly prone to any sort of destructive and unsustainable activities surrounding the 400,000- hectare of island of forest. Hence, the HoB Initiative is very timely for us to strengthen our technical cooperation to protect our own forests and natural ecosystems forming a contiguous green corridor within the heart of Borneo Island. As Borneo Island is meant to be biodiversity assemblage site as it is internationally recognized, our sub regional initiative should emphasize on sustaining such iconic global recognition and formulate practical joint efforts in ensuring its contribution to our own national agenda of development.

Now, it's time for us to work even harder to strengthen our collective strategies under the directives and guidance of the upcoming the HoB Ministerial Meeting to ensure that our common conservation vision can be more practical and achievable within a time bound.

The Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources have been realigned with the newly revamped structural organization within the ministry. This includes taking into consideration of the biodiversity and forests as well marine biological resources as one of the economic drivers in the ministerial efforts to support the national economic diversification. We foresee the highly potential of eco- and nature tourism, and sustainable and wise- use of biological resources as one of the promising industry that can contribute to our GDP in non-oil sector.

Knowing on the vast economic opportunities of biological resources and limited knowledge on these resources, the ministry has been forging a bilateral arrangement and making joint efforts with foreign research institutions to close up the research gap. Many of the projects implemented under Brunei HoB Initiative and monitoring of the HoB Center are currently involving the international collaborators or scientists. Hence, this can be extended to HoB member states and we are willing to work closely if there is an opportunity on common areas of interest.

In this juncture, I would like the Meeting to explore more opportunities of having trilateral projects for the next years to come. There are so many areas research to be explored and the joint research expeditions organized in the past involving the agencies in each member state are such successful trilateral projects that should be pursued and expanded.

Lastly, I wish you a very fruitful discussion and deliberations during the course of 2-day meeting but please take your golden opportunity and time to explore our country even though you have been here before. I hope you will be able to join our field trip to see our mangrove conservation area.

I could not end my speech this morning without acknowledging the effort of our back stage actor and actress. Without their hard work and dedication, our meeting today would not have happen. And also my thanks to the other departments that contribute assistance to The Heart of Borneo Center.

Wabillahi Taufiq Wal-Hidayah Wassalamu 'Alaikum Warahmatullaahi Wabarakaatuh.