



Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources

**ASIA-PACIFIC RAINFOREST SUMMIT
STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE**

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

by

**The Honourable Pehin Dato Yahya
*Minister of Industry and Primary Resources
Brunei Darussalam***

**Tuesday, 11TH November 2014
Sheraton on the Park, Sydney, Australia**

Honorable Greg Hunt MP, Minister for the Environment, My Fellow Government Leaders, Distinguished Guests, Delegates, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to the Honourable Minister Hunt, for inviting me to this Stakeholder Dialogue and giving me the opportunity, on behalf of the Government of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, to deliver a Keynote Address.

2. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank the Government and the People of Australia for successfully hosting this Asia-Pacific Rainforest Summit Stakeholder

Dialogue; and to also convey my sincere appreciation to the Organizing Committee for the warm hospitality and assistance rendered to my delegation and I, during our arrival here in this beautiful city of Sydney, Australia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. As all of you are already aware, forests play an important role in our livelihood, providing many benefits to mankind - from the social, economic and environmental perspective. However, despite their importance, the rainforests, which are now covering only about 6% of the earth's surface, continue to deplete at an alarming rate.

4. It was estimated that about 13 million hectares of rainforest are destroyed each year

due to illegal logging activities; clearing of land for agricultural purposes; infrastructure development; and conversion of forest lands to other land uses.

5. All these activities, are giving enormous pressure to our rainforest, and if not properly managed, our tropical rainforests - home to 50% of all the fauna and flora species on earth - will vanish from earth, sooner than expected.

6. Our tropical rainforest are not only providing shelters and habitats for many plants, animals, insects, micro-organisms, and many other wild fauna and flora, but are also providing many other benefits to human being - acting as a giant lung for the earth - absorbing large amounts of carbon dioxide and producing oxygen in exchange; source of foods, raw materials and

traditional cure against many illnesses; and many other services that provide socio-economic benefits to mankind - which actually, we have yet to fully explore and study its benefit and potential.

7. Although with the availability of modern science and technology nowadays, and with the advancement in Research and Development techniques, the richness of our rainforest biodiversity, are still under-utilised and under-studied.

8. Biologists have estimated that about more than 7 million species of plants and animals live on planet earth, but only about 1.7 million, that is less than one quarter, have been described and classified. Another 5.5 million still remains unknown to science; near to home - an estimated 15% to 35% of Borneo's flora remains

undescribed; for the insect species, out of 5 million that was estimated to live on this planet earth, only 20% have been described and classified; and while a significant percentage of about 76% of the plants species have been described and known to science, the record does not include plant algae; for other non-plants and non-animals species such as lichens, mushrooms, bacteria and micro-organism including forest microbes, reliable estimates on total number of known species to science are still lacking, let alone understanding their biology and potential utilisation for the benefit of mankind.

9. This shows that there is a need for us to intensify our research works and studies on the forest flora and fauna biodiversity, including insects, micro-organisms as well as forest microbes; not only to acquire new records of

species to science and to further enhance our understanding and knowledge about certain habitat and species of flora and fauna, but also conduct study on its potential and beneficial utilisation for mankind.

10. The worrying fact now, which is quite obvious and quite pressing, is that the rate of rainforests destruction are moving fast, whilst, our capacity and capability to conduct study, research and understand the full potential and benefits of the richness of our forests biodiversity is quite slow.

11. In this regard, there is a need for us to strengthen our cooperation and collaboration in human resource development; capacity building; research and development; technology transfer; and exchange of knowledge and scientific

information, in order to fully explore the full potential of what our rich and diverse rainforest resources can offer to mankind.

12. Thus, as a way forward, I would like to put forward the following suggestions to interested research institutions and organisations in this room, for your consideration:-

Firstly, to work and collaborate with us, in partnership with our local research institution such as the Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Research (IBER) of the University of Brunei Darussalam; and the Heart of Borneo (HoB) Centre. We can offer our pristine rainforest - our “natural research laboratory” - to conduct R&D activities in nature sciences;

Secondly, to assist us in our effort to enhance our human resources capacities and capabilities through foreign expert participation in local research work; participation of local researchers in research activities conducted abroad; internship; and others;

Thirdly, to support our research activities, including our work to conserve and protect our rainforest, by providing, not only technical support but also financial support; and

Fourthly, to support our efforts in managing, conserving and protecting our rainforest by becoming our friends and partners.

13. Last but not the least, before I end my Keynote Address this morning, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly share with you on the implementation of our Heart of Borneo (HoB) initiative.

14. As some of you might be already aware, the Heart of Borneo (HoB) Initiative is a trans-boundary conservation initiative between Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia to facilitate the conservation of the forest resources and enable sustainable development that would improve the welfare of the communities in the Island of Borneo.

15. Specifically, it aims to arrest deforestation, forest degradation and the associated loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. The

implementation of the Brunei Heart of Borneo Initiative is very timely with the current national drive for economic diversification and development. The Brunei HoB serves as a national platform to balance our economic development with social and ecological considerations. It addresses sectoral and overlapping interests and downstream influences. The Brunei HoB does not stop development, but mobilizes important and limited resources toward sustainable development.

16. Studies and research activities have been and are currently being conducted in trying to explore and discover the hidden secrets and treasures of the rainforest that lie within our Brunei HoB boundary. The implementation of the research activities, does not only involve local researchers but also renowned foreign experts

and scientists. In our currently on-going faunal biodiversity survey project at the Sungai Ingei Conservation Forest area, I am glad to highlight that the research team was joined by the 5th Earl of Cranbrook, Lord Gathorne-Gathorne Hardy, a Chartered Biologist and Naturalist from the United Kingdom, who have more than 30 years of experience in conservation works, not only in the UK, but also Malaysia, Borneo and Brunei Darussalam.

Ladies and Gentlemen

17. In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank Honourable Minister Hunt and the Organizer for giving me the opportunity to share my views and thoughts about rainforest management and conservation. I hope that it would contribute in one way or

another in meeting the objectives of this Dialogue session.

On that note, I end my Keynote Address and thank you for your kind attention and I wish you all a fruitful and productive Dialogue.

*Tuesday, 11th Nov 2014
Sydney, Australia*