



Photo by Jeremy Mendoza

## Executive Summary

**F**ive years after the publication of the first ASEAN Biodiversity Outlook (ABO 1), the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) once again reviews the progress of the ASEAN towards the achievement of milestone targets in global efforts to reduce biodiversity loss. In the midst of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and Aichi Biodiversity Targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the second edition of the ASEAN Biodiversity Outlook (ABO 2) discusses ASEAN’s progress in achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the state of major habitats in the region, and the many factors that influence and contribute to their effective management.

The Fifth National Reports (5NRs) to the CBD highlight extensive efforts of each AMS to reduce threats to biodiversity within their borders. With more clearly defined targets and in collaboration with other AMS and regional and international partners, ASEAN has been expanding programs and activities to protect the region’s rich but vulnerable biodiversity. The Aichi Targets Traffic Lights: Progress of the Implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 in the ASEAN Region (see page 21) indicate that the AMS have achieved significant headway, but despite these efforts, the gaps to achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets present tremendous challenges to conservation efforts. The analysis of actions towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in ASEAN underscores some key points:

- A common biodiversity conservation agenda and its region-wide understanding have to prelude implementation at the national and local levels of governance. A common understanding of biodiversity, its values and ecosystem services, and the consequences of its loss have to permeate the individual ASEAN person to form the base of concerted conservation action.
- ASEAN has made positive inroads in increasing coverage for protected areas where AMS with large geographic jurisdictions are key to achieving area-based Aichi Biodiversity Targets. However, there is a need to ensure effective management of protected areas as well as establish functional protected area networks. The assessment of the rest of the targets indicates that all AMS need to mobilize initiatives across sectors and generate greater participation to ensure that biodiversity targets are within reach.
- The regional conservation community has to expand beyond the usual conservation support groups and reach out to the unconvinced. ABO 2 is a call for shared responsibility of the region’s biodiversity to those who continue to exercise large-scale deforestation, pollute rivers and lakes, overexploit seas in the conduct of their business, mail-order threatened wildlife, and completely ignore principles of sustainability and accountability for the region’s biodiversity.

The region is poised to lose 70–90 percent of habitats and 13–42 percent of species by 2100. Assessments of forest ecosystems indicate an average annual rate of loss of 1.26 percent from 2000 to 2010. AMS actions have caused this rate to decline to 0.26 percent in the last five years (2010–2015). However, despite this significant progress, this decline will translate to 5,261.62 square kilometers of forest area loss per year if threats such as habitat fragmentation, clearing for agriculture, and infrastructure and housing development continue. The growing ASEAN population is raising the demand for food, and thus, agricultural areas are increasing, along with a host of problems, such as the loss of habitats, increasing use of chemical pesticides, and other threats to agrobiodiversity. The productivity and viability of the region's lakes, rivers, and peatlands continue to decline. Coastal and marine areas are significant to ASEAN as they are primary food sources for millions of residents in the region. However, studies show that most of the region's seas are overfished and degraded, threatening marine health and the food security of the region.

The AMS are ramping up efforts to address a host of issues that cut across species and ecosystems management and pose both challenges and opportunities to conservation management. ASEAN is increasing efforts to raise interest in taxonomy through field expeditions, skills training, data and information sharing, and publication and awareness campaigns to identify more species, support science-based conservation decisions, draw attention to biodiversity issues, and engage academics and citizen scientists in taxonomy. A stronger taxonomic base will aid the management of invasive alien species (IAS). The AMS have been sharing expertise and success stories, forging transboundary collaborations, as well as developing national IAS strategies to prevent the spread of IAS and reduce impacts, particularly to endangered and indigenous species.

The AMS are working on national access and benefit-sharing protocols to promote equitable benefits from genetic resources among stakeholders, particularly indigenous peoples and local communities that have nurtured natural resources for centuries. Biodiversity-rich nations are burdened with poaching and illegal wildlife trade. Collaboration with regional and international wildlife enforcement networks, demand reduction, species and habitat specific programs, community and institutional

support, and various other measures have helped strengthen wildlife conservation in the region. ABO 2 also recognizes the need to generate greater support among stakeholders, particularly the business sector, most of whom derive significant benefits from biodiversity. Urbanization and city development are on the rise, adding to encroachment on natural spaces and pressures on ecosystem services.

Climate change garners more attention among multiple stakeholders, but there is also increasing recognition of the interrelationship between climate change and biodiversity. All AMS have signified commitments to address urgent climate change concerns in their National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs). The ratification of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change strengthens the argument for integrating climate change solutions and approaches to biodiversity conservation, and as of publication, only Myanmar has yet to sign its instrument of ratification.

Updated NBSAPs, development of relevant biodiversity laws, policies, and action plans, collaborations among AMS with international organizations, increased capacity building among conservation actors, and greater public support midway to 2020 may propel AMS to a stronger performance in achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. A more comprehensive approach will be delivered through ASEAN Vision 2025, which will be articulating the ASEAN Strategic Plan on Environment (ASPEN) through the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. ASPEN aims to achieve a sustainable ASEAN Community that promotes social development and environmental protection, which also complements the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The ACB will continue to facilitate programs and activities across its priority thematic areas to strengthen biodiversity conservation and assist AMS in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020. ACB's Strategic Plan 2016–2025 will be updated in line with the ASPEN and the emerging gaps and priorities assessed in ABO 2. The Centre will also continue to strengthen its flagship programs on ASEAN Heritage Parks; biodiversity information management; and communication, education and public awareness to build capacities and share skills and knowledge among stakeholders to ensure the sustainable management of biodiversity and contribute to the management and reduction of biodiversity loss by 2020.