
**Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia Reinforce the Commitment to
Green Economies in the Heart of Borneo**

Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan – During the 8th Heart of Borneo Trilateral Meeting – concluded today (12/4) in Palangka Raya – governments of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia tabled several proposals proving that the ‘pulse’ of trans-boundary cooperation for a green future in Borneo is beating strong! WWF is encouraged to see important new initiatives were introduced to promote concrete action for sustainable development in the Heart of Borneo (HoB). However, time is of the essence. WWF hopes that the proposals can be endorsed and implemented in the near future, that ongoing developments are monitored and that the outcomes aimed for will be realized within set timelines.

WWF is happy to see that the HoB Initiative tabled new interesting ideas that pave the way for a green and sustainable development of the island of Borneo. “We commend the governments for acting in line with the theme of the meeting: ‘Committing to Green Economies for Conservation and Sustainable Development in the Heart of Borneo: From Theory to Action’,“ says WWF-Malaysia’s CEO and Chair of WWF’s Borneo Program, Dato’ Dr Dionysius Sharma.

Heart of Borneo Corridor Project

A key development was the agreement of all three governments to further discuss the details of a proposal tabled by the government of Brunei Darussalam called The Heart of Borneo Corridor Project Implementation. This proposal provides a visionary framework linking twelve protected areas of national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and conservation areas from Sabah to Kalimantan through Brunei and Sarawak. This could be the first project implemented on the ground in the HoB that aims to secure connectivity throughout all three HoB countries.

Dato’ Dr Dionysius Sharma: “Exciting days are coming if this HoB Corridor Project is to be realised. The Project aims at connecting fragmented land uses into a coherent management plan, with the state of Sarawak providing the link between Brunei and Indonesia. This initiative could make a truly trilateral HoB collaboration between the Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia governments.”

The possible establishment of The Heart of Borneo Corridor Project could enhance existing collaborations between the three countries, while new ones can be proposed. As such, this HoB Corridor Project - when successfully implemented- could potentially become the world’s longest connected landscape linking protected areas through sustainable land uses and managed under trans-boundary collaboration.

Green Ecotourism in the Heart of Borneo

The 8th Heart of Borneo Trilateral Meeting also discussed a proposal from Indonesia to design and implement a roadmap for the development and promotion of HoB as a green ecotourism and trans-boundary destination. The developments are expected to in 2018 with the declaration of the ‘Visit the Heart of Borneo year’.

Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia will further study the proposal, with all countries agreement that ecotourism has the potential to become an important component of green economy development. This can be done by building on the natural and social-cultural assets of the interior of the island and leveraging on the combined strengths and distinctive offers of the HoB in its three countries Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia. The right policy and infrastructural conditions can support a model of green ecotourism that maximizes revenues for local governments and communities, and minimizes social and environmental costs.

A Network of Local Communities

Last but not least, the delegates discussed the proposal from the Government of Indonesia to support the local communities in forming a network of local communities to promote sustainable development and conservation in the HoB. A key step would be the establishment of a Community Communication Forum in all relevant districts and one at the HoB-level to coordinate all activities and enhance communication and information exchange.

Community leaders in the HoB made a statement to the country delegates in support of the green economy framework agreed by the HoB Initiative and asked to be actively involved as strategic partners of the three governments in the implementation of this Initiative. They also formally announced that they agreed to establish a network of local community leaders.

“There is no doubt about it: talking about conservation or natural capital alone is not going to secure ownership of the HoB Initiative by local communities. The success of the initiative depends on creating benefits and wellbeing as much as on sustaining critical biodiversity and ecosystem services, and have local communities as equal partners for HoB,” says WWF’s Borneo Program Civil Society Stream Lead, Cristina Eghenter.

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For more information, please contact:

Anwar Purwoto, Director of Sumatra and Borneo Programme, WWF-Indonesia

Email: apurwoto@wwf.or.id, Mobile: +62-812 1108654

WWF Borneo Programme

The WWF Borneo Programme is a collaboration between WWF-Malaysia and WWF-Indonesia, supported by WWF's global network. Comprising over 50 different projects, the programme is aiming to conserve the forests of the 'Heart of Borneo' by working with the governments of Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia to recognize the value of nature as part of a sustainable, green economy. More info, visit panda.org/borneo

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