



ASEAN Peatlands Newsletter

Q1 & Q2 2017

EU-ASEAN Programmes launched in Jakarta, Indonesia



On 2nd March 2017, EU and ASEAN signed two new EU-ASEAN programmes on sustainable use of peatlands and haze mitigation, as well as biodiversity conservation in Southeast Asia. This reflects the shared goals and commitment of ASEAN and EU in environmental protection and sustainable development. The programmes are aimed at protecting the environment and supporting the fight against climate change in the region.

With a budget of EUR 20 million, the Sustainable Use of Peatland and Haze Mitigation in ASEAN (SUPA), a four-year programme aims to promote the sustainable management of peatlands in the region and fight against transboundary haze pollution through collective actions, sustainable local livelihoods, and reduce the risk of fire and associated smoke haze, which all contribute to global environmental management. It also contributes to the mitigation of carbon emissions from carbon-rich peatland areas, in addition to conservation of the unique peatland ecosystems biodiversity, which hosts highly endangered flora and fauna.

The other programme, Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP), with EUR 10 million of EU budget contribution for a five-year period, aims to enhance the conservation of biodiversity and effective management of protected areas in the region. It will target the network of existing and potential ASEAN Heritage Parks to reduce biodiversity loss. The programme will be implemented in close coordination with the EU Delegation in Manila and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) in Los Banos, the Philippines.

ASEAN sets priorities to address transboundary haze pollution in Mekong sub-region

CHIANG RAI, 24 February 2017 – ASEAN Ministers and representatives responsible for land, forest fires and haze from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam gathered in northern Thailand today to discuss transboundary haze pollution.



At the sixth meeting of the Sub-Regional Ministerial Steering Committee on Transboundary Haze Pollution in the Mekong Sub-Region (6th MSC Mekong), the said officials endorsed the Chiang Rai 2017 Plan of Action which set priorities for the work of the MSC Mekong countries in addressing transboundary haze pollution.

“Following the adoption of the Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control with Means of Implementation at the 12th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-12) to the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution in August 2016 in Kuala Lumpur, it is now time for the implementation to take place, and I am very delighted to learn of the progress made within the Mekong sub-region,” said Vongthep Arthakaivavatee, Deputy Secretary-General for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department in his remark.

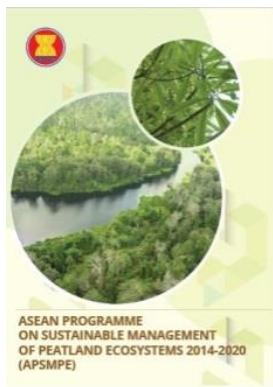
The MSC Mekong countries have all agreed to set priorities for the sub-region and pledged to work closely with each other and all interested international partners to address transboundary haze pollution. Progress in developing new projects to address peatland conservation as well as fire and haze prevention in the region was highlighted at the meeting.



19th MSC Meeting held in May

The 19th Sub-Regional Ministerial Steering Committee (MSC) Meeting on Transboundary Haze Pollution was held in Kuala Lumpur on 18th May 2017. It discussed key issues pertaining to haze prevention measures in the five MSC countries comprising Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

Retrieve the full Press Release [here](#).



ASEAN Task Force on Peatlands (ATFP) Holds Second Meeting in Putrajaya, Malaysia

On 13 February 2017, a Regional Peatland Governance Workshop on The Implementation of APSMPE 2014-2020: Successes, Challenges and Roadmap for Sustainable Peatland Management Programme was held at the Everly Hotel, Putrajaya.

During the meeting, the ASEAN member state (AMS) delegates presented the progress of peatland conservation in their countries, followed by a discussion on peatland research, development and innovation efforts in Malaysia. Other speakers were from the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and Global Environment Centre (GEC).

Putra Malaysia (UPM) and Global Environment Centre (GEC).

This was followed by the 2nd ATFP Meeting on 14 February 2017. This follows from the first meeting which was held in Manila, Philippines in June 2015. It discussed various programmes that are in the pipeline for implementation in the ASEAN member states. Among them were the ASEAN-EU Sustainable Use of Peatland and Haze Mitigation in ASEAN (SUPA) by EU; Strengthening Regional Experiences on Sustainable Peatland Management in ASEAN (REPEAT) by GIZ; GEF-6 Project on Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems in Mekong Countries by IUCN, and GEF-5 Project on Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems in Indonesia (SMPEI) and GEF-6 Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems in Malaysia (SMPEM) by IFAD.

The meeting touched on the Roadmap on ASEAN Cooperation towards Transboundary Haze Pollution Control and updated ATFP National Focus Points. On 15 February 2017, the participants visited the Centre of Excellence at North Selangor Peat Swamp Forest, Compartment 73 of the Raja Musa Forest Reserve. They also visited Sungai Sireh village where an ecotourism programme for peatlands is being developed.

RSPO Workshop on Carbon Compliance

RSPO organized a workshop on 15-16 March 2017 in Kuala Lumpur for growers that were interested in the RSPO compliancy in relation to "Carbon, Greenhouse Gases and Peatlands". It included a field visit on the 17 March at North Selangor Peat Swamp Forest. The training session was co-organised and supported by the Wetlands International (WI) with support from the RSPO Emission Reduction Working Group (ERWG) and the Global Environment Centre (GEC).

Peatland Restoration in Indonesia

In Indonesia, the Peatland Restoration Agency (BRG) says the rehabilitation work is entering the canal blocking phase, especially in West Kalimantan. A total of 2 million hectares of degraded peatlands will be restored in 7 provinces by 2020. In 2017, 400,000 hectares is slated for rehabilitation with 5,600 canal blocks to be built in addition to revegetation.

P.M. Haze (Singapore) marching ahead with stronger support

P.M. Haze has received new funding support from National Youth Council (NYC) Singapore for 2017 outreach activities. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has awarded a grant to research on "The environmental, social and ethical challenges of the annual haze in Southeast Asia". They have also received continued funding support from Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA) and Young NTUC.

From 18 to 22 May, PM.Haze volunteers completed their first canal blocking project in Sungai Tohor, Indonesia. The trip was an eye opener for them to learn about sustainable community peatland development practices. [Read More>>](#)



Sago palm grows naturally on wet peat, so it's more eco-friendly compared to oil palm and pulp wood. Sago growers also leave existing trees to retain water and improve productivity. The community makes sago snack and noodles for own consumption and sale. There is a plan to popularise sago products to support their sustainable production and livelihood. This programme received support from WALHI Riau, the Singapore Institute of International Affairs; journalists and photographers from Straits Times and Lianhe Zaobao. The next PEEP activity is scheduled to be held in Malaysia in July 2017.

Kampung Sungai Sireh Village Committee visited Sepahat Village in Riau, Indonesia

BUKIT BATU – 19 Sungai Sireh Village Committee Members from Malaysia visited Sepahat Village in Bengkalis, Indonesia on 21 March 2017. This is part of a knowledge sharing programme between the two communities which are both located in important peatland landscapes. The visitors were welcomed by Bukit Batu District officers. The Malaysian community hopes they can forge close ties and share knowledge with their counterparts. The two villages share many similarities in terms of culture, peatlands, rural life and beaches. The "Tinggal Kampung" programme is a homestay experience where visitors get the opportunity to stay in villages and enjoy local activities and games. Sepahat is also learning from Sg Sireh villagers who already have a robust homestay business going.

Sime Darby Foundation Peatland Rehabilitation Project Completed

Bestari Jaya, 28 March 2017 – Yayasan Sime Darby (YSD) has planted 18,500 tenggek burung saplings on 20ha of land located next to Tennamaram estate in Selangor, Malaysia. The area is degraded peat swamp area in the Raja Musa Forest Reserve. The area was highly susceptible to forest fires due to illegal encroachment and drainage for agricultural activities. Rehabilitation and hydrological management has reduced the risk of forest fires during the dry season.



The initiative with RM1 million funds, was run in collaboration with Global Environment Centre (GEC), the Selangor Forestry Department (SFD) and Friends of North Selangor Peat Swamp Forest commenced in January 2014. The project is linked to the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy, and supports the implementation of the Malaysian National Action Plan on Peatlands.

Peatland Conservation Progress in Malaysia

Rehabilitation efforts in Raja Musa Forest Reserve, Selangor, continued in 2016. Over ten hectares of the forest was planted with 6,375 seedlings by 1,695 volunteers. Volunteers included staff from various companies, government agencies and NGOs; students from several schools, colleges and universities; and local community members. The rehabilitation programme is organised by the Selangor Forestry Department and Global Environment Centre with support from the HSBC Bank Malaysia Berhad, Sime Darby, and GEF-Small Grant Programme (GEF-SGP) Project. Efforts continued in 2017.



Preparation for the GEF funded Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems in Malaysia (SMPEM) project is under way with the Design Mission by its Implementing Agency, i.e. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) that took place from 1st to 15th May 2017. Five sites have been identified in four states. They are Southeast Pahang Peatland Landscape in Pahang state, Klias Peninsula Peatland Landscape in Sabah; Maludam Peninsula Peatland Landscape in Sarawak; North Selangor Peat Swamp Forest and buffer zone, and South Selangor Peatland Landscape in Selangor. GEF has allocated US\$9.4 million which will be matched by more than \$30 million from the government of Malaysia and other sources. The design is expected to be completed by September 2017 and project implementation to start in early 2018.

The Malaysian Wetlands Policy (2005) is being reviewed in a series of workshops organized by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (NRE) with technical support from the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) this year. Since the policy was drawn over 12 years ago, the sustainable management of wetlands has become more challenging; especially in meeting the obligations of the Ramsar Convention. Concerns of all relevant parties must be considered especially the government and authorities of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak states. The review is timely, considering the adoption of the 4th Ramsar Strategic Plan 2016 –2024 at COP12 held at Punta del Este, Uruguay in June 2015. The NRE is also undertaking review of the National REDD+ Policy where a consultation workshop was recently held.

Fires and Haze in Thailand

Thailand experienced some haze, especially from fires in the North and some in the South, but fires were swiftly extinguished and the damaged area is not extensive. Wildfires in Nan, Phayao and Surat Thani had burnt 80 rai (13 hectares) of forest land. Other affected areas were Lampang and Thung Salaeng Luang National Park. (<http://www.nationmultimedia.com/news/national/30308252>)

Progress of the Mekong Peatland Project Development

The design phase for the "Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems in Mekong Countries" project is currently under way since its concept was accepted by GEF in April 2016. With US\$2.9 million funding from GEF, the regional project involves Cambodia, Lao PDR and Myanmar. The implementing agency for this project is IUCN with collaboration of Global Environment Centre, ASEAN Secretariat and national agencies as partners. The key targets for this project will be expansion of protected peatland areas in the Mekong region, strengthening national capacity for peatland management, protection and management of peatlands based on Best Management Practices. The project is expected to be approved by the GEF CEO and implementation in second half of 2017.

Developments in Indonesia

Beginning in 2016, serious efforts were taken in Indonesia to ensure that transboundary haze does not recur in the region. The Peatland Restoration Agency or Badan Restorasi Gambut (BRG) is doing all it can to help avoid fires, train fire control teams and rehabilitate degraded areas. Among the efforts are preparation of groundwater wells to provide water during dry spells and fires. A rehabilitation fund has been launched and water level monitors/piezometers were installed in selected locations. Indonesia is taking stringent legal action and measures on perpetrators. Unused lands and concessions are being converted back into protected areas. Regulations on water level monitoring and rehabilitation have also been issued to aid the process.

The Government Regulation (PP) no 71/2014 was revised to PP 57/2016 as of 2nd December 2016. The new regulation places a permanent moratorium on peatland exploitation, stating that everyone is prohibited from clearing new land until a zoning system for the protection and cultivation of the peatland ecosystem is in place. This will allow natural succession, rehabilitation, and restoration to improve degraded peatland ecosystems. The deforestation moratorium which expired in May was also extended by another two years. This would be the third extension of the moratorium, which was first implemented in 2011.

The Bonn Challenge

A BONN Challenge Roundtable Meeting was successfully held in Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia on 9-11 May 2017 with twenty-nine foreign delegates attending to discuss various environmental issues. Indonesia is the first Asian country to host the high-level environmental meeting since it was initiated in Bonn in 2011. South Sumatra has one of the largest peatland areas but a large area was damaged by catastrophic fires. The province is now striving to rehabilitate damaged areas.

Global Peatland Initiative (GPI) meetings

The Second GPI Partners Meeting was held in Jakarta, Indonesia from 15th to 17th May 2017. The Global Peatlands Initiative (GPI) was launched at COP22 in Marrakesh in 2016 with the aim to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by increasing the knowledge of peatlands (extent, changes, thickness, drivers of change, etc.) in order to improve policies for conservation, restoration and sustainable management of peatlands, of which delivering benefits for water security, biodiversity, people and the climate. The Second Partners Meeting aimed to exchange experiences between key peatland countries, preliminary identify the needs of pilot countries with substantial peat coverage, discuss new discoveries and share approaches and technologies for restoration, conservation and sustainable use of peatlands, and chart the way forward for the GPI for 2018-2020.

Global Landscape Forum: Peatland Matters

Held on 18 May 2017 in Jakarta, Indonesia, this Forum highlighted the role of peatlands in climate mitigation and community development. A thematic session on the management and protection of peatlands drew attention to the role of peatlands in climate change mitigation, sustaining livelihoods and in protecting biodiversity. It sought to prove that local experiences are a crucial component of peatland management. The event prioritised peatland communities, and addressed community perspectives. Scientific discussions explored carbon stock measurements, the health effects of fire and haze, investment for peatland restoration, and connecting people and peatlands. The GLF events also showcased case studies from around the globe. Discussions and other materials are available at: <http://www.landscapes.org>.

New Publication: Fire Management Plan for Kuala Langat Peat Swamp Forests



A Fire Management Plan has been created for the fire prone South Selangor Peat Swamp Forests; as a reference for foresters, fire-fighting teams and volunteers living and working in that area. It is written in Bahasa Malaysia for practical purposes.

Click on image to download.

Publication: ASEAN Guidelines on Peatland Fire Management

A Train-the-Trainer Workshop on Implementing the ASEAN Guidelines on Peatland Fire Management was held from 30th May to 1st June 2016 in Pontianak, Indonesia. The workshop trained the participants to be national trainers to promote the endorsed ASEAN Guidelines on Peatland Fire Management in respective AMS. It also provided a platform for the participants to share their existing practices on peat forest and land fire management measures implementing in the respective country through country case studies. It is hoped that these national trainers will be resource person to conduct localized training programme for relevant line agencies on managing peatland fires.



APSMPE is a programme of



The ASEAN Secretariat
70A Jl. Sisingamangaraja
Jakarta 12110, INDONESIA
Tel : (6221) 7262991, 7243372
Fax: (6221) 7398234, 7243504

Supported by:



Prepared by:



Global Environment Centre
Tel : (603 7957 2007) Fax: (603) 7957 7003
Website: www.gec.org.my; www.aseanpeat.net
Email : peatland@gec.org.my

