

**SEMINAR ON NATIONAL FOREST RESOURCE ASSESSMENT  
- THE WAY FORWARD**  
23<sup>rd</sup> October 2014, Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam

**OPENING REMARKS OF THE GUEST OF HONOR  
AWANG HAJI SAIDIN BIN SALLEH  
DIRECTOR OF FORESTRY**

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Bismillah Hirahmaneer Raheem

The Chairperson, Puan Hajah Jamilah binti Haji Abd Jalil

Distinguished guests,

Our partner from the ASEAN - Republic of Korea Forest Cooperation  
Project,

Our resource speakers,

Participants,

ladies and gentlemen

Assalamualaikum Warramatullahi Wabarakatuh,

Selamat Pagi,

Annyeong haseyo and good morning to all of you

It is indeed an honor to join you all this morning here in this  
Seminar on National Forest Resource Assessment - The Way Forward

My special thanks to the chairperson of the organizing and the  
working committee for inviting me to speak and to launch this seminar  
and special thanks also goes to everyone in this room.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Continuous assessment on the landscape or the landuse pattern over time systematically is a necessity and important basis for future revision of the landuse planning of a country. Maintaining sufficient forest cover in the overall landscape of Brunei Darussalam is our top most priorities and concerns over the years putting Brunei in the world map as a country with a strong forest conservation policy within the south east asean countries.

This seminar is very timely and crucial both in our efforts to upgrade our capacities and capabilities in achieving our common goals and objectives for the sustainable use management of our resources, conservation of biological diversity and mitigating climate change reflected in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nation Forum on Carbon and Climate Change (UNFCCC), \international Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) objectives attaining Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) set by the United Nation (UN).

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Global Forest Resources Assessment processes is not new, perhaps it has been carried out by FAO since 1948 whose objective is to document global forest resources, from the said assessment information on how countries came up with policies and how those policies are transformed into implementation is shared amongs FAO members.

Commission on Forestry (COFO) in its twentieth session in 2010 requested FAO to a long-term strategy for the FRA programme consistent with prospects for sustainable funding. Commission on Forestry in its twenty-first session (2012) endorsed this strategy and the implementation of FRA 2015 as a first step. FRA 2015 can help shape both policy making processes, inform and encourage forest-related investment decisions by a wide range of actors, including governments, private companies, NGOs and donor organizations. FRA will be able to adapt to meet different needs of the diverse global forest data users: governments, nongovernmental organizations, the media, intergovernmental agencies, academia, research institutions and the private sector. Understanding and meeting these diverse client needs is an important on-going challenge and an important element in how FRA 2015 was designed.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Forests are key sources of wood and other forest products, water supplies, medicines, livelihoods, ecosystem stability, carbon storage, and other vital services, participants underscored. Many drew attention to the need to recognize and respect the rights of Indigenous peoples and other forest dwellers, and their vital role in sustainable forest management. The opportunities that **forests** provide for sustainable development and poverty eradication can hardly be over-emphasized. Forests cover roughly 30% of the world's land area and provide a variety of products and ecosystem services that deliver social, environmental and economic benefits. More than 1.6 billion people depend to varying degrees on forests for their livelihoods, such

as for fuel, medicinal plants and food and 200 million people directly depend on forests for their survival. Indeed many poor and vulnerable people depend directly on biodiversity and forests.

Forests are amongst the most important habitats for biodiversity and provide crucial ecosystem services. Forests also capture and store significant amounts of CO<sub>2</sub>, thus contributing to climate change mitigation. They also prevent soil erosion, land-slides and contribute to disaster risk reduction. From the economic perspective forests provide products in terms of biomass for renewable energy, timber for construction and non-timber by-products, and generate jobs and incomes, including to a large number of poor people in rural areas and thus contribute to the inclusive green economy.

At the same time, forests are vulnerable and their resources continue to be under threat from deforestation and degradation, with dramatic consequences for the environment and societies.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 13 million hectares of forests are lost every year. This is mainly due to illegal logging, fires, agricultural and urban expansion, driven by constantly increasing population and demand for food and fibres, inter alia, and it is increased by weak governance. Deforestation and forest degradation, notably of tropical forests, are responsible for 15 to 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Deforestation and forest degradation, together with climate change, have impacts on vulnerable mountain ecosystems, which play a crucial role in providing water resources, hosting biodiversity and preventing disasters in highlands as in lowlands.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is a need to ensure that forest areas are protected and managed sustainably, enhancing their multi-functional role, through the sustainable use of forests, their protection, restoration, through afforestation and reforestation, and the enhancement of forest-based economic as well as of social and environmental benefits. It is necessary to address the direct and indirect drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, including through the adoption of integrated land-use management and land planning.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The role of forests to society is changing. Forests used to be the building platform during the early days of Brunei and most of our neighboring countries. It provides the primary resources that support developing industries in building our nation and at the same time, paving the way for infrastructure and commercial development. We used to enjoy abundant renewable natural resources in form of timber, non-timber and other associated products from the forests. And lately, we understand the invaluable role of forests in mitigating climate change and natural disaster, conserving biological diversity, and protecting natural heritage. We also understand that diminishing forests have widespread economic and environmental impacts at local and global scale and respect no boundaries all over the world. And as

a result, the appreciation of this condition has led us to implement comprehensive, reasonable and scientific approaches in the management and sustaining forest resources.

Our region qualifies as among the most species rich in the world. And Brunei shares the same reputation of having rich biological diversity based on the result of numerous national scientific expeditions conducted. However, we also share the same threats brought about by increasing pressures from progressing economic and industrial developments. Majority of our land area is still covered with forests.

The last Brunei Forest Resource Assessment in 2010 reported that 75% of the country is still covered with tree vegetation. However, we are aware that our increasing demands for shelter, infrastructure and industry development, coupled with increasing demand for timber raw materials, have gradually affected our forest stocks and the biological diversity associated with it.

The diminishing forest resources have significantly getting attention from all levels of society, in both local and global environmental initiatives. Recently, the United Nation Climate Summit has committed for the conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and supports the necessary actions to halve the rate of natural forest loss by 2020 and end the decline by 2030 while restoring 150 million hectares of degraded lands. As such, the New York Declaration on forests provides the necessary actions and resources to achieve these twin global commitments.

Locally, we have acknowledged the threats on our forest resources during the conduct of a comprehensive forest resources planning study in 1984. The study has resulted with the implementation of the reduced-cut policy, the development of timber plantations and the definition of forest reserves for production, conservation, recreation and national park purposes. And in support for the continuous call on forest conservation, the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources decided to further reduce forest areas for production purposes and facilitate a more efficient means of production through timber plantation development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite with the current scenario of visible natural disaster, brought about by climate change, loss of biodiversity and diminishing forest cover, the demand for forests continue to rise steadily. The expansion of forest road networks, industrialization, rising demand for forest products, good and services have continuously creating pressure more than the advancement of forest management. And therefore, there is a need to cope-up in developing effective and efficient forest management strategies that will respond quickly on evolving forest issues and concerns.

However, forest management strategies, no matter how sound or effective they are, should be complemented with a monitoring system that would provide significant information and providing trends, telling us if we are on the right track in achieving our goals. It is important to have an accurate scenario on the status and trends of forest resources to facilitate the improvement of national forest policies in relation to

forest management. Improved forest information will also catalyze the development of scientific and technical studies that may contribute in government decision-making and private sector investment and development. It is our responsibility to present relevant information on forests and forest resources to our stakeholders, including other sectors, non-government institutions and the general public.

Ladies and gentlemen,

What we will be discussing later in this Seminar will be the development of a national information platform on forests and forestry. The Forest Resources Assessment processes is not new, perhaps it has been carried out by FAO since 1948. However, it will be a new approach that we will try to learn and use in generating relevant national forestry information to guide us - forest managers, in developing responsive forest management plans and policies to achieve our national and common objectives.

This one-day seminar may be short, but we will consider it as our initial step in moving forward for the national adoption of the forest resources assessment processes. Definitely, we will be meeting again soon in doing concrete steps for the Brunei National Forest Resources Assessment. For the meantime, I would like to invite everybody to take this opportunity to learn and take advantage of the presence of our resource speakers. Let us recognize the value of this Seminar and identify its possible application in our own work and responsibilities.

To end my remark, I wish that this Seminar will produce fruitful outputs and I wish you all to have an active and warm discussion leading to strong national stakeholder collaborations and partnership.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate the organizing committee for organizing this event successfully.

Dengan Kalimah Bismillah Hirahmaneer Raheem serta bertawakkal kepada Allah Subhanahu Wata'ala, I officially open the Seminar on National Forest Resource Assessment - The Way Forward.

Terima Kasih, kamsahamnida and Thank you.

Wabillahi Taufik Walhidayah Assalamualaikum Warahmattullahi Wabarakatuh