

Asean greening initiative targets 10 million trees in 10 years

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AS part of its recent 54th founding anniversary celebration, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) launched a region-wide greening program that will ramp up restoration efforts and plant at least 10 million native trees within 10 years.

The Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and the Asean Secretariat led the virtual launch of the Asean Green Initiative (AGI), together with representatives of the Asean Member States (AMS), civil society organizations and the private sector, ACB said in its news release.

Demonstrating the strong cooperation and commitment among the 10 AMS to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration in the region, the AGI aims to set standards for the recognition of tree-planting activities and programs across the region that not only regrow our forests but contribute to peoples' well-being, livelihood improvement and resilience-building.

“Across the Asean, there are ongoing commendable efforts in nature restoration. With the AGI, we hope to give recognition to the outstanding initiatives that comprehensively address the concerns of the people and the environment,” ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita S. Lim said.

Lim cited various tree planting movements in the Asean, such as the aim of Singapore to plant a million trees over a period of 10 years and Malaysia’s 100 million tree-planting campaign.

H.E. Kung Phoak, Asean Deputy Secretary-General for Asean Socio-Cultural Community, and Norsham binti Abdul Latip, Senior Undersecretary for Biodiversity and Forestry Management, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of Malaysia, opened the virtual launch.

Kung emphasized that among the main objectives of the AGI are to continue building and sustaining momentum for more robust collective actions in raising awareness and enabling ownership, which can be done by “as simple as planting trees in your backyard.”

Convention on Biological Diversity Executive Secretary Elizabeth Maruma Mrema took part in the event through a video message.

In a talk show dubbed “BiodiversiTalks,” representatives of the Communities Organized for Resource Allocation, Metro Pacific Investments Corporation, Boon Rueang Wetland Forest Conservation Group of Thailand and the AMS exchanged insights and updates on ongoing biodiversity conservation efforts that may be aligned with the AGI.

The AGI is supported by the European Union and the German development agency Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit through the Biodiversity Conservation and Management of the Protected Areas in Asean Project and the

Institutional Strengthening of Biodiversity Sector in the Asean II Project, respectively.

Ambassador to the Mission of the European Union to Asean, H.E. Igor Driesmans, and Deputy Head of Mission of Germany in Jakarta, Indonesia Thomas Graf also delivered their messages.

The launch and implementation of the AGI are aligned with the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, a global movement to accelerate restoration goals and commitments, which commenced this year.

The campaign is a rallying call on the urgent need to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide to “end poverty, combat climate change, and eliminate mass extinction.”

The region plays a vital role in this global call for ecosystem restoration and biodiversity conservation. At least 60 percent of the world’s tropical peatlands, 42 percent of mangroves and 15 percent of tropical forests are located in the region.

While the region is known for its rich biodiversity, it is also vulnerable to climate-related risks and human-driven activities that drive biodiversity loss.

“Restoring the condition of our ecosystem to its healthy state will take a whole-of-society approach. Through concerted and collaborative efforts that support this initiative, we can achieve incredible results and transform a more sustainable future for the Asean community,” Lim said.

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