



PRESS RELEASE

OPENING CEREMONY

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM CONFERENCE ON FOREST TO REEF IN CONJUNCTION WITH BRUNEI MID-YEAR CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION (MYCE) 2025

Bandar Seri Begawan
Tuesday, 17 June 2025

The Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism, through the Forestry Department and the Department of Fisheries, in partnership with Universiti Brunei Darussalam and Poni Group Sdn Bhd, had officially commenced a three-day Brunei Darussalam Conference on Forest to Reef at the International Convention Centre (ICC), Berakas. The conference, held in conjunction with the Brunei Mid-Year Conference and Exhibition 2025 will take place from Tuesday, 17th June 2025 until Thursday, 19th June 2025.

Present as the Guest of Honour was Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr. Awang Haji Abdul Manaf bin Haji Metussin, Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism, who also delivered the welcoming remarks and subsequently officiated the opening ceremony. In his speech, he highlighted the importance of recognising inland forests, mangroves, seagrass, and coral reefs as “vitality interconnected in supporting ecosystem services, sustaining livelihoods, and enhancing our resilience to climate change.” He further emphasised that “protecting our forests and reefs is not a task for government alone—it is a shared mission that requires every one of us to act now,” reinforcing Brunei Darussalam’s commitment under the National Biodiversity Policy and Strategic Plan of Action (NBPSPA) 2024–2030, which aligns with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. *(Welcoming remarks by the Guest of Honour is attached)*

Also in attendance were the High Commissioners and Ambassadors, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism, Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Teknologi Brunei, Deputy Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism, senior government officials, representatives from both local and international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics, researchers, representatives of relevant private sector stakeholders and conference participants.

Datuk Dr. Ismail Parlan, Director General of the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), delivered the first keynote address, focusing on the role of mangroves in coastal protection and climate mitigation. He highlighted their critical ecological functions—including the ability to trap sediment and support coral reef resilience, serve as nurseries for marine life, and act as highly effective blue carbon sinks with long-term soil carbon storage potential.

The second keynote was delivered by Mr. Sudono Salim, Chief Growth Officer and Co-Founder of Jejakin, Indonesia, who presented innovative approaches to monitoring blue carbon ecosystems through digital technology. Using AI-powered platforms such as CarbonAtlas, he showcased how integrated tools like satellite imagery, drone mapping, and IoT sensors can transform mangrove conservation into verifiable, scalable climate solutions across ASEAN, supporting voluntary carbon

markets and national climate goals.

This was followed by two thematic sessions: the morning session focusing on the Role of Blue Carbon Ecosystems and the afternoon session addressing Ecosystem Synergies: Linking Forests and Reefs for Biodiversity Conservation. Expert speakers from regional and international institutions also participated in the sessions.

The conference aims to connect policymakers, academics, and stakeholders with global biodiversity leaders to exchange knowledge and best practices. It focuses on promoting blue and green economic growth, including eco-tourism and carbon markets, while enhancing capacity-building, education, and professional networks in biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, and disaster risk reduction. It also supports integrating international best practices and new economic opportunities into national forest-to-reef strategies.

The Brunei Darussalam Conference on Forest to Reef features a distinguished panel of local and international speakers, including leading researchers, government officials, and environmental experts from prominent institutions. These speakers bring diverse expertise in climate science, ecosystem management and sustainable development, sharing the latest research and best practices to support Brunei Darussalam's commitment to environmental conservation and climate resilience.

The conference will feature six (6) thematic topics, including (1) the Role of the Blue Carbon Ecosystems; (2) Ecosystem Synergies: Linking Forests and Reefs for Biodiversity Conservation; (3) Innovations in Monitoring and Restoring Forest and Coastal Ecosystems; (4) Ecosystem Valuation: The Economics of Ecosystem Services in Forests and Coastal Ecosystems; (5) Blue Carbon Ecosystems as Climate Solutions; and (6) Expedition on Forest to Reef – Findings. Optional visits, including mangrove tour at Sungai Damuan and a visit to the Universiti Brunei Darussalam Botanical Research Centre, will offer participants firsthand experience of Brunei Darussalam's natural ecosystems and conservation efforts.

Further information regarding the Brunei Darussalam Conference on Forest to Reef can be obtained through the official website of the Forestry Department at www.forestry.gov.bn and the Department of Fisheries at www.fisheries.gov.bn, as well as their respective Instagram accounts @forestry.brunei and @fisheries.brunei.

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Prepared by:
Forestry Department & Department of Fisheries
Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism Brunei Darussalam

**Welcoming Remarks by the Guest of Honour,
Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia
Dr. Awang Haji Abdul Manaf bin Haji Metussin,
Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism**

**Opening Ceremony – Brunei Darussalam
Conference on Forest to Reef**

17 June 2025



OPENING REMARKS

**YANG BERTHORMAT
DATO SERI SETIA DR HAJI ABDUL MANAF BIN
HAJI METUSSIN, MINISTER OF PRIMARY
RESOURCES AND TOURISM**

AT

**BRUNEI DARUSSALAM CONFERENCE ON
FOREST TO REEF**

Tuesday, 17 June 2025

8.30 am - 8.40 am

International Convention Centre (ICC)

Bandar Seri Begawan

Negara Brunei Darussalam

Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem

Your Excellencies;

Esteemed Guests;

Senior Government Officers;

Distinguished Speakers and Moderators;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamualaikum Warramatullahi Wabarakatuh,

Salam Sejahtera and a Very Good Morning to all of you.

1. It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to the Opening Ceremony of the Brunei Darussalam Conference on Forest to Reef, co-organised by the Forestry Department and the Department of Fisheries, in partnership with Universiti Brunei Darussalam and Poni Group Sdn. Bhd., held in conjunction with the Brunei Mid-Year Conference and Exhibition (MYCE) 2025.
2. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to all who have made this event possible — including our esteemed speakers and moderators, sponsors, and participants, and not forgetting our organising team. Your presence and support reflect our

collective commitment to advancing biodiversity conservation and integrated ecosystem management.

[Understanding the Forest to Reef Continuum: An Interconnected Ecosystem Approach]

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. The theme “Forest to Reef” highlights the ecological continuum between our terrestrial and marine environments — from inland forests and mangroves to seagrass and coral reefs. These ecosystems are not only biologically diverse, but also vitally interconnected in supporting ecosystem services, sustaining livelihoods, and enhancing our resilience to climate change.
4. Globally, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in its 2022 report states that forests cover approximately 31% of the Earth’s land area. However, more than 420 million hectares of forest have been lost since 1990 due to deforestation and degradation — a staggering decline with serious global consequences. Meanwhile, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), also in 2022, reported that coral reefs, despite covering less than 1% of the ocean floor, support more than 25% of all marine

species. Alarming, over 50% of coral reefs worldwide have already been lost or severely degraded — Imagine snorkeling over a once-thriving reef, only to find lifeless, bleached coral. This reality affects millions worldwide.

5. Brunei Darussalam is fortunate to have maintained a relatively high level of forest cover. Forest covering 72.1% of the country's land area, are home to remarkable floral and faunal species, including many that are endemic. Additionally, the nation's marine ecosystems with coral reefs and diverse marine life, further enhance its environmental richness.
6. The ecosystems of forests and reefs are essential to preserving the stability of the environment. While reefs preserve coastlines, support marine life, and maintain fisheries, forests control water systems, preserve biodiversity, and store carbon. These ecosystems are closely linked; the health of our coastal and marine environments is always impacted by what happens inland. Conserving this biodiversity is essential for maintaining the ecosystem services that underpin the country's social, economic and environmental health.

[Highlighting Shared Responsibility in Conserving Forest and Reef Ecosystems]

7. Conserving them requires integrated action. Protecting our forests and reefs is not a task for government alone — it is shared mission that requires every one of us to act now. It calls for the involvement of everyone — including communities, individuals, the private sector, academia, and other relevant stakeholders. Only through collective responsibility and sustained collaboration can we ensure that these ecosystems are protected and continue to support our well-being and quality of life into the future.
8. In fact, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported in 2019 that nature-based solutions — such as forest conservation, reforestation, and coastal ecosystem restoration — could provide up to 37% of the cost-effective emissions reductions required by 2030 to keep global warming below 2°C. This underscores the powerful role that healthy ecosystems play in addressing the global climate crisis.

[Insights from the Recent Brunei Darussalam Expedition on Forest to Reef]

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. I am pleased to note that the Brunei Darussalam Expedition on Forest to Reef was recently conducted, covering key sites in Selirong Island and Pelong Rocks. The expedition generated valuable preliminary insights on biodiversity, ecological processes, and potential strategies for protection and sustainable use.
10. To promote the continuing discussion on biodiversity conservation and the sustainable management of interrelated ecosystems, as well as to direct future research and conservation initiatives, some of these discoveries will be presented during this conference.

[Continuing the Momentum from Last Year's Biodiversity Conference]

11. This conference also represents the continuity of last year's Brunei Darussalam Conference on "Biodiversity: Nature's Blueprint for Sustainability", which focused primarily on terrestrial forest ecosystems. That conference laid the

foundation for deeper exploration of land-based biodiversity.

12. This year, we broaden our focus to the interface between land and sea — highlighting the interconnectedness of forests, mangroves, and reefs. In Syaa Allah, next year, our journey will reach deeper into the reefs themselves — exploring how coral ecosystems can be safeguarded against climate change.

[Aligning National Action with Global Biodiversity Frameworks]

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. Brunei Darussalam is committed to biodiversity conservation through the National Biodiversity Policy and Strategic Plan of Action (NBPSPA) 2024–2030. This framework aligns closely with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which sets ambitious targets, including protecting 30% of land and marine areas and restoring degraded ecosystems by 2030. Our alignment with this global initiative reflects our dedication to safeguarding biodiversity for future generations.

14. Recognizing the importance of both terrestrial and marine biodiversity, the National Biodiversity Policy and Strategic Plan of Action (NBPSPA) outlines strategies for conservation, sustainable use, and capacity-building. It emphasizes prudent resource management, community engagement, and equitable benefit-sharing, ensuring biodiversity protection remains a national priority. This holistic approach integrates environmental resilience with socio-economic well-being, reinforcing our broader commitment under the Convention on Biological Diversity.
15. Implementation of this plan requires a whole-of-nation approach, involving government institutions, academia, the private sector, and local communities. While still a work in progress, it sets the foundation for long-term collaboration and coordination, guiding national efforts in ecosystem protection and sustainable development.

[Translating Knowledge into Action in Support of National Vision]

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

16. The Conference today presents an opportunity to bridge research, policy, and practice. Thematic discussions will explore ecosystem synergies, the value of blue carbon,

innovations in restoration, and the economics of biodiversity. These conversations are vital in shaping effective policies and partnerships.

17. This conference also aligns with the aspirations of Wawasan Brunei 2035, particularly in promoting a sustainable environment, enhancing the quality of life, and supporting long-term economic development. By advancing scientific research, encouraging collaboration, and strengthening ecosystem-based planning, the conference contributes to Brunei Darussalam's broader vision of resilience and sustainability.
18. I encourage all participants to engage actively in the discussions, exchange insights, and explore ways to contribute toward advancing our collective efforts in conservation and ecosystem sustainability. Together, let us take meaningful action so that future generations inherit forests still standing and reefs still thriving — our legacy must be one of resilience, not regret.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

19. Without further ado, and with the kalimah **“Bismillahir Rahmannir Rahim”** and **Selawat and Salam upon our Prophet Muhammad Sallallahu ‘Alaihi**

Wasallam and his companions, it is my pleasure to declare the “Brunei Darussalam Conference on Forest to Reef” officially open.

Wabillahi Taufiq Wal Hidayah, Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh. Thank you.