



## PRESS RELEASE

### CLOSING CEREMONY BRUNEI DARUSSALAM CONFERENCE ON FOREST TO REEF

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**Bandar Seri Begawan**  
**Thursday, 19 June 2025**

The Brunei Darussalam Conference on Forest to Reef, which lasted three days from June 17 to June 19, 2025, at the International Conference Center, Berakas, ended today.

The conference is jointly organized by the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism through the Forestry Department and the Department of Fisheries, in partnership with Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) and Poni Group Sdn Bhd in conjunction with the Brunei Mid-Year Conference and Exhibition 2025 (Brunei MYCE 2025).

Attending the closing ceremony was Yang Mulia Dayang Noralinda binti Haji Ibrahim, Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism, as the Guest of Honour.

At the ceremony, the guests had the opportunity to listen to the summary of the Brunei Darussalam Conference on Forest to Reef, delivered by Yang Mulia Dayang Hajah Wanidawati binti Haji Tamat, Acting Director of Fisheries. The summary highlighted key outcomes and insights gathered throughout the three-day conference ***(The summary of the conference is attached)***. The event concluded with closing remarks by the guest of honour ***(Closing remarks by the guest of honor is attached)***.

Heads of Departments, the Director of the Institute for Biodiversity and Environmental Research (IBER), and the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Poni Group Sdn Bhd were also present at the closing ceremony, as well as academics, researchers, and other conference participants.

**-END-**

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

**Insert:**

- 1) Speech by Pemangku Pengarah**
- 2) Closing Remarks**

**BRUNEI DARUSSALAM CONFERENCE ON FOREST TO REEF SUMMARY**  
**- Hajah Wanidawati binti Haji Tamat**

**Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem**

Esteemed Guests;  
Senior Government Officers;  
Distinguished Speakers and Moderators;  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

**Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh,**

**Salam Sejahtera and a Very Good Afternoon to all of you.**

1. It is an honour to present a summary of the Brunei Darussalam **Conference on Forest to Reef**. But before I begin, allow me to first extend my heartfelt congratulations and appreciation to all those who made this Conference a success – our moderators, speakers, our scientific expedition team, participants, all support staff, and sponsors. Your dedication and contributions have truly made this gathering meaningful.
2. As we approach the closing of this Conference, allow me to briefly take you through the key highlights from the past three days.

[DAY 1]

3. During the opening ceremony, our Conference was officially opened and graced by Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr. Haji Abdul Manaf bin Haji Metussin, the Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism. In his remarks, the Minister underscored the vital link between terrestrial and marine ecosystems – from forests and mangroves to seagrasses and coral reefs. These ecosystems are ecologically interconnected and critical to biodiversity, climate resilience, and local livelihoods.
4. The Minister also reaffirmed Brunei Darussalam's commitment to biodiversity conservation, particularly through the recently adopted National Biodiversity Policy and Strategic Plan of Action 2024-2030, which aligns with global targets under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The conference builds on the momentum of previous biodiversity discussions and integrates them into Brunei Darussalam's broader goals under Wawasan 2035.
5. The Minister stressed that safeguarding nature is a shared responsibility, not one borne by the government alone. He encouraged further collaborations and partnerships from all levels of society, from local communities to international partners.
6. The opening remark was followed by keynote presentations from Dato' Dr. Ismail Haji Parlan, Director General of Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) and Mr. Suduno Salim, Chief Growth Officer and Co-Founder of Jejakin, Indonesia.

7. Dato' Dr. Ismail Haji Parlan highlighted the value of mangroves as vital ecosystems, offering critical habitats, resources, and coastal protection against climate impacts, hence it is crucial to protect these top-priority ecosystems through sustainable management of forests as well as ongoing conservation efforts.
8. Second keynote speaker, Mr Sudono Salim, highlighted the application of advanced technology such as AI-powered platforms and real-time monitoring using IoT sensors and drone mapping as enablers to implement scalable and measurable blue-carbon projects that could contribute to promote data-driven decision making, carbon management solutions, enhances long-term impact of blue carbon initiatives, as well as support national climate goals and sustainable development goals.
9. Two Thematic Topics were discussed in Day 1 which are The Role of Blue Carbon Ecosystems and Ecosystem Synergies: Linking forests and reefs for biodiversity conservation.
10. The first thematic session, "The Role of the Blue Carbon Ecosystem," emphasised the critical role of mangroves, seagrasses, and tidal marshes in climate regulation, biodiversity conservation, coastal protection, and sustaining livelihoods. Despite their limited global coverage, these ecosystems are powerful carbon sinks but face increasing threats from land-use change, pollution, and inadequate funding. The session called for stronger conservation through sustainable management, restoration, and integration of blue carbon into national climate policies and carbon markets. It also highlighted the ecological connectivity among coastal

ecosystems and the need for advanced tools like spatial mapping to support strategic action. Brunei Bay was highlighted as a transboundary blue carbon hotspot rich in biodiversity, home to dugongs, turtles, and dolphins, and serving as a vital carbon corridor. The first thematic session concluded with a call for stronger regional cooperation, enhanced data sharing, and inclusive policies to ensure long-term climate and biodiversity outcomes.

11. The second thematic session, “Ecosystem Synergies: Linking Forests and Reefs for Biodiversity Conservation,” explored the integration of forest, marine, and coastal ecosystem management from regional and international perspectives. The speakers highlighted the interdependence of ecosystems like mangroves and coral reefs in enhancing biodiversity, carbon storage, water quality, and resilience to climate change. Malaysia’s holistic approach, ASEAN’s regional biodiversity initiatives, and UK-supported inclusive conservation programmes demonstrated the value of cross-sectoral cooperation, community engagement, and sustainable financing. Brunei Darussalam’s successful case studies highlighted innovative mangrove and seagrass restoration efforts, demonstrating tangible ecosystem recovery. These discussions also underscored the importance of scientific research, integrated management approaches, and cross-border collaboration to protect interconnected ecosystems at the regional level.

[DAY 2]

12. In Day 2, two thematic topics were discussed namely: Innovations in Monitoring and Restoring Forest and Coastal Ecosystems (Thematic Topic 3); and Ecosystem Valuation: The Economics of Ecosystem Services in Forests and Coastal Ecosystem (Thematic Topic 4).
13. Thematic 3 session discussed the transformative role of advanced remote sensing technologies—such as terrestrial LiDAR scanning (TLS), drones, satellite imagery, and artificial intelligence—in forest and coastal ecosystem monitoring. Studies conducted across peat swamp and plantation forests in Southeast Asia demonstrated that high-resolution TLS, combined with satellite data, provides accurate and scalable estimates of above-ground biomass and carbon stocks. However, the accuracy of LiDAR outputs depends heavily on field conditions and technical parameters, which the speakers addressed through site-specific, ground-truth-based approaches. Complementing this, remote sensing tools were also shown to distinguish biomass density variations between forest types, supporting climate mitigation efforts, REDD+ initiatives, and biodiversity conservation. This session underscored the critical role of technological innovation in transforming how forest and coastal ecosystems are monitored and managed across the region. As Southeast Asia faces increasing environmental pressures, these cutting-edge tools not only improve data accuracy and support informed decision-making but also enable nations like Brunei Darussalam to take the lead in developing transparent, scalable, and forward-looking conservation strategies.

14. Thematic Session 4 showcased diverse approaches demonstrating how ecosystem services can drive sustainable development when ecological value is recognized, local communities are empowered, and conservation is integrated with economic opportunity. This includes the followings:

- A transformative economic model that quantifies ecological stewardship as a verifiable and tradeable contribution. Using a system such as Producer Investment Evaluation (PIE) system that converts ecosystem care into financial assets. This approach allows countries to unlock sustainable finance without commodifying nature, positioning conservation as an economically valuable activity;
- Another approach is RAWES (Rapid Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem Services), a tool that helps wetland managers quickly understand and include the many benefits of wetlands in their planning. Built on the Ramsar Convention's principles, RAWES uses field observations, local knowledge, and community input, scoring both the value and scale of benefit (local, regional, or global) in a consistent manner;
- Community-Based Ecotourism (CBET) program by Malaysia allows local and indigenous communities to co-manage forest resources while building tourism ventures around their natural beauty and unique culture;
- Innovative, community-based approaches to addressing climate change and plastic pollution through circular economy initiatives, such as Wastehub which empowers local communities through education, green job creation, and sustainable waste management;



- Ocean Accounts as a standardized framework that integrates environmental, social, and economic data to support sustainable ocean development. It was shared that Indonesia is using these accounts to support initiatives such as coral reef insurance, blue carbon valuation, and marine ecosystem investment, with support from the Global Ocean Accounts Partnership (GOAP); and
- Crocodile conservation in the Philippines, which shows how species once seen as dangerous can be transformed into assets through sustainable use, cultural integration, and community stewardship. With regulated farming, tourism, and habitat protection, crocodile conservation is now a model for coexistence and livelihood generation.

### [DAY 3]

15. The Fifth Thematic session which was held in Day 3 of the conference, underscored the pivotal role of blue carbon ecosystems in combating climate change. Through the theme “Blue Carbon Ecosystems as Climate Solutions,” the session convened global experts to share innovative strategies, from carbon finance and mangrove conservation to utilising advanced technologies such as AI, drones, and carbon modeling. The discussion highlighted actionable pathways by integrating science, policy, and community-driven initiatives to enhance climate resilience, preserve biodiversity, and foster sustainable development. The session reinforced our commitment to global climate goals and set a foundation for collaborative, ecosystem-based solutions to ensure a sustainable future for both people and the planet.

16. Our final thematic topic featured the results of a 7-day scientific expedition to Pulau Selirong and Pelong Rocks, involving 13 researchers from Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Japan. Over the course of the expedition, the team conducted 13 research projects across various ecological and environmental themes.
17. The scientific expedition team had demonstrated strong commitment and dedication in achieving the objectives of their research. The topics of the expedition research ranged from flora and fauna survey in mangrove ecosystems, tracking carbon in mangrove waters, examining chemical composition in tree species, accessing pollution in coral ecosystems as well as the potential of Pulau Selirong Forest Reserve to be an ASEAN Heritage Park.
18. To summarise, our presenters delivered interesting and good preliminary findings, including the following:
  - Research suggests that the Brunei River may contribute to increased carbon levels, potentially from anthropogenic sources; earlier studies also detected microplastics and coliform bacteria in the area. A strong correlation between tidal influence and organic carbon levels in mangrove waters was observed, highlighting the need for further investigation into sediment dynamics and human impact;
  - Another assessment revealed microplastic debris - primarily from ropes and discarded fishing gear - was present in coral reef ecosystems. These findings offer vital baseline data for

understanding plastic pollution in Brunei Darussalam's coral reef ecosystems and provide valuable insights for future conservation and marine management strategies;

- Several other studies focused on the flora and fauna of mangrove areas recorded promising biodiversity. At Pulau Selirong preliminary results identified 19 plant species, at least 35 insect species, 51 bird species, 7 mammal species and 9 reptile species. Additionally, 37 species of fish were documented, indicating high fish biodiversity. At Pelong Rocks, 7 bird species were observed. Researchers noted that actual species richness could be higher, recommending a longer survey period for more comprehensive data;
- Next the research highlighted Importance of carbon accounting for international framework such as UN Sustainability Goals (SGDs). It is estimated that the total of above ground carbon storage for Pulau Selirong to be 6 million tonnes;
- And lastly the expedition also examined the eligibility of Pulau Selirong to be an international network of Protected Areas. It was also suggested that Pulau Selirong has the potential to be recognised as a RAMSAR Site.

Distinguish guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

19. Once again, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to our scientific expedition team, as well as to all the speakers and moderators of this Conference, for your professionalism, commitment and insight in successfully achieving the objectives of

this Conference. While three days may not have been enough to fully explore every aspect of our themes, I am confident that the knowledge shared, the connections built, and the ideas exchanged have laid the groundwork for impactful action and future collaboration.

20. Thank you all for your participation, your attention, and your unwavering commitment to protecting our forests, our reefs, and our shared future — from forest to reef.

- End -



## **CLOSING REMARKS**

**YANG MULIA  
DAYANG NORALINDA BINTI HAJI IBRAHIM,  
DEPUTY PERMANENT SECRETARY II  
MINISTRY OF PRIMARY RESOURCES AND TOURISM**

**AT**

**BRUNEI DARUSSALAM CONFERENCE ON FOREST TO  
REEF**

**Thursday, 19 June 2025**

**International Convention Centre (ICC)  
Bandar Seri Begawan  
Negara Brunei Darussalam**

Bismillilahirahmanirahim,  
Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh,

Salam sejahtera and a very Good Afternoon

**Distinguished Guests, Moderators, Speakers, Ladies and Gentlemen.**

1. I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude and extend warm congratulations to everyone of you for the remarkable success of the Brunei Darussalam Conference on Forest to Reef! Your unwavering dedication and commitment truly made this event extraordinary. A special thank you goes out to our inspiring keynote and thematic speakers and our moderators for generously sharing their invaluable insights and knowledge.

2. As we wrap up this Conference, I feel that reflecting on the enriching exchanges that have shaped our time together is essential. Alhamdulillah, the discussions over the past three days have significantly enhanced our understanding of the crucial linkages between our

precious mangroves and the vibrant ecosystems of coral reefs. These heartfelt conversations have highlighted the urgent need for innovative and integrated approaches to managing our ecosystems effectively.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. The core message of this Conference highlights the profound interconnectedness of our terrestrial and marine environments. Protecting one aspect necessitates our attention to others. The health of our biodiversity, the resilience of our coastlines, and the sustainability of our economies are all interlinked in a delicate balance. As we embark on conservation and management efforts, we must adopt a holistic perspective, recognizing that our actions in one area can ripple through to affect many others. Together, we can strive toward a sustainable future that not only benefits our environment but also supports our communities!

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. We explored a diverse array of essential topics during this conference, including the significance of Blue Carbon in our ecosystems, the innovative connections between forests and reefs, as well as the pressing issues around conservation, restoration, and climate solutions. We also delved into the economic value of these ecosystems and shared exciting findings from our recent scientific expedition, which journeyed from forest to reef.

5. I am confident that we have addressed a comprehensive set of subjects that resonate deeply with our collective interests and expertise in this crucial field. I would also like to extend a hearty congratulations to the Scientific Expedition team for their outstanding dedication and effort in exploring the breathtaking landscapes of Brunei Darussalam—from our rich mangroves to the stunning reefs. Their discoveries highlight the richness of our biodiversity and its critical role in maintaining ecological balance.



Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. Through the enlightening presentations, engaging discussions, and the collaborative spirit that has defined our time together at this Conference, we have not only deepened our understanding but also fortified our resolve. As we move forward, let's carry the knowledge, partnerships, and inspiration we've cultivated here into tangible actions on the ground. Let this Conference act as a catalyst for ongoing dialogue and decisive action, fostering integrated conservation, cross-sectoral cooperation, and community-centered stewardship.

7. As was highlighted during the Opening Ceremony, this journey—from canopy to coral—is not solitary. It requires the collective commitment of governments, academia, civil society, local communities, and the private sectors.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

8. Now, as we come to the end of this conference, I would like to spotlight the fantastic collaboration between the

Forestry Department, the Department of Fisheries, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, and Poni Groups Sdn Bhd. Your unwavering commitment and teamwork exemplify what we can achieve together. Your dedication has not only made this conference a resounding success but has also laid a strong foundation for future collaboration and progress in our shared mission. Thank you for your invaluable contributions!

9. A big KUDOS goes to the members of the organizing committee, our generous sponsors, volunteers, and all who played a role in bringing this conference to life. Your tireless efforts have ensured everything ran smoothly and have played a vital part in advancing our mission to protect and preserve our environment.

10. I hope the knowledge and insights gained here will significantly enhance your conservation efforts. Thank you all for being part of this incredible journey.

11. With that, I officially close the Brunei Darussalam Conference on Biodiversity. Thank you once again, and to those of you traveling back to your home

countries, I wish you safe travels. May our collective efforts extend beyond these walls, leading to healthier ecosystems, resilient communities, and a hopeful, sustainable future for all!

Wabillahitaufig walhidayah assalamualaikum  
warahmatullhi wabarakatuh.

Thank you.