



POLICY STATEMENT ON MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY AND ASSOCIATED ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN SARAWAK

Sarawak Biodiversity and Ecosystems and its importance

Sarawak is the largest region in Malaysia and renowned for its rich biodiversity and ecosystems. Known as the Land of the Hornbills, it is a unique and biologically diverse region in terms of its population, culture, geography and history. The tropical rainforests of Sarawak are important global carbon sinks and are home to over 6,000 species of flowering plants, 600 bird species and house most of the 63 endemic Bornean terrestrial mammal species.

Globally significant species include the Orang Utan, Proboscis Monkey, sun bear, bear cats, etc. Sarawak also hosts unique tropical ecosystems – rainforests, mountains, lime cave systems and coastal mangroves and coral reef islands all of which provides ecosystem services to people, functions as habitats to wildlife, plants and micro-organisms, and mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Its rich biodiversity and ecosystem services it provides for Sarawak are fundamental to the welfare of all Sarawakians. Sarawak's rich biodiversity and ecosystems underpins a vast range of ecosystem services in the region as sources of food, medicine, shelter, energy, and

of course economic development. Additionally, there are invaluable contributions of biodiversity towards the regulation of multiple ecosystem functions and processes, which supports food security, livelihoods, clean air, the quantity and quality of fresh water, spiritual and cultural values, climate regulation, pest and disease regulation, and disaster risk reduction.

It is not something that must be taken for granted. Biodiversity loss does inevitably occur and where possible it must be prevented or mitigated.

In Sarawak the main cause of biodiversity loss can be attributed to various land uses, agriculture expansion, infrastructure development and sectors such as forestry and mining. Sarawak does indeed have many policies that are natural resources, species and environmental pollution based; but none with regard to overall biodiversity and ecosystems management as of yet. It is apparent that such a specific policy will be required if Sarawak is to continue to successfully protect and manage its biodiversity in a sustainable manner.

Development Planning, the whole of government and biodiversity mainstreaming

The Sarawak Post Covid 19 Development Strategy 2030 identifies 6 economic sectors i.e., manufacturing, agriculture, tourism, forestry, mining and social services as sectors that would spur the economy. These are sectors that have the potential to drive biodiversity loss if not planned and implemented with sustainability in mind. In its quest to achieve developed status by 2030, Sarawak is committed to ensure environmental sustainability as it is identified as a key pillar towards this aspiration.

Balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability will require the exploration of new paradigms. In striving to achieve this Sarawak believes that mainstreaming of biodiversity through a whole of government approach is expected to address some of the challenges with regards to biodiversity loss and achieving environmental sustainability.

Towards this, Sarawak is keen to develop a Biodiversity Master Plan which will prescribe the strategies and actions that effectively mainstream key biodiversity aspects. More specifically it will contain strategies that integrate, as far as possible and as appropriate, the conservation and sustainable use of

biological diversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies and economic and financial decision making.

The said Master Plan will also determine some of the key priorities for biodiversity mainstreaming related actions in Sarawak. Biodiversity mainstreaming is a union of various efforts that will ensure that biodiversity, and the services it provides, are appropriately and adequately factored into policies and practices that rely and have an impact on it. Decision making through mainstreaming is the core element.

Sarawak's adoption and efforts towards the whole of government approach for biodiversity conservation and management is a milestone policy decision for Sarawak.

What it encapsulates and identifies ideally are approaches that coordinate efforts at multiple levels of government as well as other entities in Sarawak that work collaboratively towards a shared goal for biodiversity in Sarawak. Through the Master Plan and other policy initiatives Sarawak is in fact advancing the whole of government approach highlighted in the 12th Malaysia Plan; albeit at the Sarawak level.



Such an approach requires the development and use of mechanisms that enable environmental and biodiversity related institutional integration. This is to be accomplished not only by including environment-based ministries/ departments in Sarawak but also by linking vertically and horizontally all institutional structures in Sarawak responsible for finance, economic

development and sectoral development. To effectively govern biodiversity, Sarawak shall be guided by sustainable development principles. These principles shall be applied in decision making processes concerning conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. These underlying principles are: -

Precautionary Principle	<p>Precautionary principle shall be applied to protect biodiversity in Sarawak from further and irreversible loss and damage. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.</p> <p>This principle shall be applied in cases where there are possible threats or potential risk of irreversible environmental damage to or within or adjacent to areas with high biodiversity and ecosystem functions as well as for Protected Areas due to a proposed development or activity or project.</p>
Shared Responsibility	<p>All sectors of society shall have shared responsibility in the conservation and sustainable utilization of biodiversity and ecosystem services through effective participation, stakeholder consultation and collaborative management of biodiversity and ecosystem services.</p> <p>One of the means of responsibility sharing is through co-management to protect, conserve and manage biodiversity. Co-management further provides the potential to tailor rules to local conditions, increase regulatory compliance, improve collaboration, and lead to greater stakeholder engagement and empowerment subsequently improving effectiveness of biodiversity management. Sarawak is in a great position for shared responsibility due to its high interface linking humans and natural resources.</p>
Access to Information	<p>Sarawak government is committed to giving access and providing information related to biodiversity and ecosystems to stakeholders (and public) for improved management of biodiversity and ecosystems. This is guided by openness and in consistent with the relevant rules and practices of Sarawak government.</p>
Intergenerational Principle	<p>Every generation in Sarawak shall have an equal place and access in relation to biodiversity and ecosystem services, whereby:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decision making processes should effectively integrate both long term and short term economic, environmental, social and equitable considerations. • present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of biodiversity is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations
Ecosystem Approach	<p>Sarawak shall adopt the ecosystem approach as a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in an equitable way. The ecosystem approach seeks to mainstream biodiversity conservation into broader land and seascapes.</p>

Priorities for Action as a Whole of Government

Sarawak is committed to the following actions: -



Integrate biodiversity and ecosystem services into development policies, sector plans and budget processes, and address coherence and synergies with other economic or sectoral policy goals, including the National Policy on Biological Diversity through the development a specific Biodiversity Master Plan.



Develop the capacity at all levels to enable the integration of sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystem services into development policies, plans, programmes and projects.



Invest in biodiversity and ecosystem services in an effort to build resilience to the impacts of climate change.



Identify and devise institutional mechanisms and options for potential actions and practices to effectively implement the Master Plan.



Introduce long term strategic approaches to biodiversity mainstreaming.



Improve decision-making related to biodiversity and ecosystem management through more robust, efficient and informed use of environmental assessment tools, such as Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).



Undertake review of sectoral legislation that would effectively provide for sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity mainstreaming.

Priorities for Action for Sarawak Agencies

Sarawak endeavors to as an extension of the whole of government approach that encapsulates ownership, alignment, harmonization, and most importantly the delivery of positive outcomes for biodiversity in Sarawak by all agencies through these actions: -

1

Raise awareness amongst all government agencies of the links between biodiversity and ecosystem services

2

Standardize/organize and internalize assessment and monitoring of biodiversity in Sarawak through mainstreaming efforts by both quantitative and qualitative measures identified in the Biodiversity Master Plan

3

Establish effective communication channels in order to mutually share biodiversity and other related information

4

Establish coordination mechanism that engage and promote the integration of biodiversity and development linkages into agency level policy and decision making

This policy statement serves as a primer for action towards the implementation of the Sarawak Biodiversity Master Plan in many aspects. Other strategies, actions and targets for biodiversity will be identified in the said Master Plan, which is time-bound. The collaborative and joint efforts of all levels of government in Sarawak is essential towards realizing its ambitions and objectives. To this end the Master Plan must be owned by all government agencies and its stakeholders.

