



Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation

RESOLUTION OPPOSING CONVERSION OF MALAYSIAN NATIVE FORESTS TO NON-NATIVE RUBBERWOOD PLANTATIONS

Whereas, Malaysia has a variety of biologically critically tropical forest ecosystems including lowland dipterocarp forest, montane heath forest, limestone forest, and peat-swamp forest; and

Whereas, Malaysia's rainforests sustain numerous rare and threatened species of plants and animals, including Orangutans, Asian Elephants, Asian Tapirs, and Malayan Tigers; and

Whereas, most of Malaysia's tropical forests are designated as "Permanent Reserved Forests" (PRFs) under the country's National Forestry Act 1984 and various State forestry enactments; and

Whereas, existing provisions in the National Forestry Act 1984 allow large tracts of natural forests within PRFs to be replaced by plantations so long as these are designated for 'timber production'; and

Whereas, forests within PRFs are now being replaced by non-native rubberwood (or latex-timber clone) plantations, which can be tapped for latex five years after planting and then harvested for timber after 15 years; and

Whereas, PRFs designated for rubberwood plantations in Malaysia are expanding rapidly, increasing from 1,626 hectares in 2006 to 44,148 hectares in 2009; and

Whereas, the total area of rubber plantations in Malaysia is projected ultimately to increase to 1.2 million hectares; and

Whereas, further conversion of tropical forests to exotic plantation monocultures will result in large-scale damage to native plants and wildlife, increased greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation, downstream flooding and stream damage, and the decline of other important ecosystem services; and

Whereas, in 1992 the Government of Malaysia pledged that at least half of its land area will remain permanently under forest cover, and in 1993 it approved a National Conservation Strategy that identified a number of ‘critical areas for conservation’ that included expanses of native tropical forest; and

Whereas, in 1992 the Government of Malaysia revised its National Forestry Policy such that “National Forest Management must take into account the need to conserve the flora and fauna for the preservation of biological diversity of the forest”, specifically mentioning the need for programs to conserve areas with unique species; and

Whereas, Malaysia’s New Economic Model aims to ensure sustainability of its economic growth by placing a strong emphasis on preserving and sustainably managing its natural resources;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation, the world’s largest scientific organization devoted to the study, protection, and sustainable use of tropical ecosystems:

- Urges the Government of Malaysia to protect its remaining tropical forests, particularly those within PRFs, and to effect an immediate moratorium on conversion of such forests to rubberwood and other timber plantations; and
- Urges the Government of Malaysia to amend its National Forestry Act 1984 and the various State forestry enactments to ensure that tropical forests in PRFs are not converted to plantations unless: (a) the public has been consulted on the proposed conversion; (b) the PRF has been specifically classified as a ‘plantation’; and (c) the PRF is not an area critical for the conservation or restoration of unique species of flora or fauna (as described in the National Conservation Strategy 1993); and
- Urges the Federal Government of Malaysia to provide its various State governments with alternative revenue streams via mechanisms such as Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) or Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes, as incentives to maintain its natural forests.