



The Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation

RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE 'HEART OF BORNEO' TRANSBOUNDARY CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

WHEREAS, the forests of Borneo are exceptionally species-rich in both flora and fauna, sustain a large proportion of locally and regionally endemic species, and have new species continually being discovered; and

WHEREAS, these forests store globally significant amounts of carbon in both their vegetation and soils; and WHEREAS, Bornean forests provide homes, food, and other natural products to a large number of local peoples; and

WHEREAS, these forests are experiencing one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world (recently over 3.9% per annum) via poor timber-harvesting practices, conversion to plantations or agriculture, fires, and other threatening processes; and

WHEREAS, hunting and the international trade in wildlife products, in concert with vastly increased physical accessibility to forests via expanding road and logging networks, is having a devastating impact on many Bornean wildlife species, particularly larger vertebrates such as the Sumatran Rhino, primates such as the Orang Utan and Bornean Gibbon, and many birds including several hornbill species, pheasants, and raptors; and

WHEREAS, many of these declining species have important functional impacts on forest ecosystems as predators, herbivores, seed dispersers, and plant pollinators; and

WHEREAS, many compelling reasons exist for the protection of 'mega reserves' in the tropics, including maintaining viable populations of species that are vulnerable to hunting, forest fragmentation, and edge effects; reducing disturbance by fires; and providing the diverse range of habitats required by wildlife species that migrate seasonally along major elevational gradients or that move large distances in response to large, infrequent flowering and fruiting events; and

WHEREAS, the largest surviving tracts of undisturbed forest in South-East Asia occur in the Bornean transborder highlands of Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia; and

WHEREAS, the landmark declaration to support the 'Heart of Borneo' initiative by the governments of Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia, signed on 12 February 2007, will create

important mechanisms to establish a network of protected areas and land under sustainable management totalling 240,000 km²; and

WHEREAS, forests protected by the Heart of Borneo initiative, as presently described, are largely concentrated in upland and montane areas; and

WHEREAS, the biodiversity of plants, invertebrates, vertebrates, and other species in Borneo has a remarkably complex geographical distribution, and is often concentrated in poorly protected lowland forests, in areas with unusual geologies and soil types, and in vulnerable coastal ecosystems;

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:

- APPLAUDS the Governments of Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia (hereafter the 'transboundary nations') for their pioneering decision to sign and support the Heart of Borneo declaration; and
- RECOGNIZES the leading role that nongovernmental organizations have played in promoting the critical Heart of Borneo initiative and in assisting the transboundary nations in its conceptualization, design, and implementation; and
- URGES the transboundary nations to recognize that the Heart of Borneo initiative, while of enormous importance, will not be sufficient in and of itself to protect Bornean biodiversity; and
- IMPLORES the transboundary nations to establish further protected areas in Borneo, especially in rapidly vanishing lowland forests and coastal ecosystems, either as part of the Heart of Borneo program or as separate initiatives; and
- IMPLORES the transboundary nations to improve biodiversity conservation in Bornean production forests, and to ensure that such forests are not simply converted to agricultural land-uses such as oil-palm plantations after logging.
- URGES the transboundary nations to improve the protection of their existing protected areas, especially for surviving reserves in lowland forests and other imperilled forest types, from illegal hunting, logging, encroachment, and wildlife trade; and
- URGES the international community, private sector, nongovernmental organizations, international aid agencies, scientific organizations, and government partners to provide direly needed financial and technical support for the crucial Heart of Borneo program and for related conservation initiatives to help protect the rapidly vanishing ecosystems and biodiversity of Borneo.