



# Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation

## Resolution Opposing Road Construction through Kerinci Seblat National Park, Indonesia

WHEREAS, Kerinci Seblat National Park in west-central Sumatra, Indonesia, is of exceptional national and international importance for its biological, cultural, and aesthetic values: it was established in 1982 and subsequently had its protected area status strengthened in 1996 and again in 2006; it was Indonesia's first gazetted National Park; and it was designated as an ASEAN Heritage Site in 1984 and then a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2003; and

WHEREAS, at 13,971 km<sup>2</sup> in area, Kerinci Seblat is Sumatra's largest national park, spanning a large altitudinal range (from 300 to 3805 m) that includes the highest point in Sumatra, and thereby sustains a diverse array of tropical forest ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, Kerinci Seblat National Park is home to over 370 bird species, including 17 of Sumatra's 20 endemic birds, such as Schneider's Pitta, the Sumatran ground cuckoo, and Salvadori's Pheasant, and has been declared an Important Bird Area by Birdlife International; and,

WHEREAS, Kerinci Seblat National Park is home to over 85 native mammal species, including rare or imperiled fauna such as the Asian elephant, Asian tapir, serow, Sumatran rabbit, Malayan sun bear, Sumatran tiger, clouded leopard, and marbled cat, whose populations are extremely vulnerable to habitat loss, fragmentation, and overhunting; and

WHEREAS, Kerinci Seblat National Park is a stronghold for the Critically Endangered Sumatran tiger, with the highest occurrence of tigers within any Sumatran protected area, and is therefore recognized as a globally important Tiger Conservation Landscape; and

WHEREAS, field monitoring data indicate that wild tiger populations at Kerinci Seblat National Park have increased in recent years, in response to improved wildlife protection there; and

WHEREAS, a major proposed development project, involving construction of three 'disaster-evacuation roads' and one economic road, would penetrate into core zones of the Kerinci Seblat

National Park and dramatically increase human access to these isolated rainforest areas by providing a road link between provincial population centers; and

WHEREAS, scientific studies have demonstrated that increased road access to isolated areas such as Kerinci Seblat National Park increases forest loss and degradation through illegal logging and smallholder encroachment and subsequent human-wildlife conflicts; and

WHEREAS, such impacts will have negative impacts on tiger conservation at Kerinci Seblat, thereby increasing the likelihood of local extinction of its critical tiger population, and will counter the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry's international pledge to increase the country's overall tiger population by 3% annually through 2022; and

WHEREAS, the proposed disaster-evacuation routes (Kerinci-Bungo, Kerinci-Muko Muko, and Kerinci-Merangin) and economic route (Kerinci-Renah Kemumu) through Kerinci Seblat National Park will cut through protected watershed forests and threaten the vital ecosystem services they provide through clean and predictable water supplies to hundreds of thousands of people as well as regulating water flows and reducing flooding; and

WHEREAS, a road constructed through the heart of a National Park is illegal under national law in Indonesia, will undermine law enforcement efforts within Kerinci Seblat National Park, and could help to trigger road-construction projects within other Indonesian protected areas; and

WHEREAS, many leading Indonesian and international scientists have decried the plan to build a road network within Kerinci Seblat National Park because of its unacceptable environmental costs;

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

- **URGES** the Government of the Republic of Indonesia to immediately reject the proposed road network in the heart of Kerinci Seblat National Park and reaffirm to Indonesian provincial and district governments that national law does not permit road construction in national parks; and
- **RECOMMENDS** that the Government of the Republic of Indonesia collaborate with national and international scientists to identify environmentally sound alternatives for road infrastructure that meet local development aspirations without irreparably damaging the integrity of Kerinci Seblat National Park and other Indonesian protected areas; and
- **APPEALS TO** the Government of the Republic of Indonesia to ensure that the rule of law is immediately upheld so that illegal road construction and forest disruption are halted in and around Kerinci Seblat National Park.