

ASEAN COMMITMENT TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Standardizing Biodiversity Reporting and Information Sharing

► By REXIE JANE PARREÑO

National Biodiversity Reference Units (NBRUs) of member countries participating to the ASEAN Regional Centre for Biodiversity Conservation (ARCBC) have each started establishing a biodiversity information network, linking each other through standardized reporting and information sharing protocols. This is to strengthen efforts toward the sustainable use of biological resources, in line with their commitments to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Since managing information varies from country to country, the CBD established a Clearinghouse Mechanism (CHM) to ensure that all governments have access to the information and technologies they need for their work.

Thus, database specialists and country coordinators NBRUs of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam agreed to streamline the reporting system by:

- a) identifying information that could be shared among member countries;
- b) developing methods and enhancing technical capability for information sharing; and
- c) identifying a standard metadata format appropriate for each member country.

All this was decided upon during the ARCBC conducted-ASEAN Regional Workshop on Standardization of Biodiversity Reporting and Information-Sharing held last June 2000 in Bogor, Indonesia. The Research and Development Center for Biology-LIPI and the NBRU in Indonesia coordinated this event.



Workshop on Standardization of Biodiversity Reporting and Information Sharing.

Specifically, the participants:

- **Identified the Biodiversity Information Data Sets, Users and Providers.** Data sets identified included country basemap; protected area system map, protected area database, list of protected species, and relevant laws and regulations for the use of policymakers, managers, non-government organizations, researchers and students, and many more. Data providers included the concerned government and non-government agencies that produce the relevant data sets, protected area managers, and international organizations.
- **Proposed an ASEAN Biodiversity Networking and Data Sharing Arrangement.**
- **Defined the relationships among and functions of the NBRUs, the Clearing House Mechanism, and the Biodiversity Data Focal Points.**

While organizing their networks, the NBRUs have agreed on an initial list of datasets (including their various users and custodians) that should be shared in the ASEAN biodiversity network, such as the

significant amount of data already available. The NBRUs would organize the information from data providers.

For its part, the ARCBC would develop the software to be used and provide the expertise to set up the system in each NBRU. It would also assess the status of ASEAN biodiversity, based on national and regional datasets, for the ASEAN Environmental Report. The Centre would likewise establish sharing arrangements with other international organizations such as the World Conservation Monitoring Center, Birdlife International and the International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management.

As of this writing, national workshops have already been conducted in Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines. (See *articles on pages 36: Sharing of Biodiversity Information in Vietnam, and 45: Biodiversity Information Sharing Protocols in the Philippines*.) These workshops aim also to address issues related to Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), security of information, and other protocols to ensure the efficiency of the network. ●