KEMENTERIAN TENAGA DAN SUMBER ASLI

KERATAN SURAT KHABAR

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GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

Funding, indigenous people key to success



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AT a meeting of Parties to the United Nation's Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in the southern Chinese city of Kunming, world governments are looking ahead to the adoption of new goals and targets for nature to be met this decade: CBD's "Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework" (GBF).

The draft framework lays out broad actions to help transform society's relationship with biodiversity and fulfil a previously agreed shared vision of "living in harmony with nature" by 2050.

This week's online summit Part One sets the stage for a decisive face-to-face meeting in April. Among the new targets is one advanced by the Campaign for Nature (CFN): protect 30 per cent of the world's land and marine areas by 2030.

These should consist of protected areas and "other effective area-based conservation measures" (OECMs), such as territories inhabited by indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs).

Although IPLCs comprise only six per cent of world population, the areas involved cover 85 per cent of those proposed for conservation.

An overwhelming body of evidence confirms the importance of IPLC-managed and governed territories to curbing biodiversity loss, recognising the role IPLCs as traditional stewards of the natural world.

Historically, government designations of protected areas have not always respected the rights of IPLCs and, in some cases, have led to violence, displacement, and human rights violations.

This "fortress model" of biodiversity conservation has also fallen short of its goals because local communities have not been fully involved in decision-making and benefit sharing.

CFN believes that securing IPLCs land tenure should be central to achieving global biodiversity objectives, safeguarding the rights of IPLCs and ensuring their free, prior and informed consent and alignment with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

A recent webinar convened by the Asean Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), Atri Advisory and the CFN heard from IPLC leaders, CBD delegates and other Southeast Asian experts.

Yongyuth Yuthavong, Thailand's former deputy prime minister, pointed out: "Indigenous people are custodians of some of the most biologically diverse territories in the world. Their traditional knowledge has been and continues to benefit all of humankind."

The ingenuity of IPLCs was eloquently summed up by one of the youngest participants, Natasha Tanjutco, co-founder of Kids for Kids, the Philippines: "Indigenous people are very scientific. It's just that their science includes the heart."

Joji Carino, a leading IPLC spokesman, is convinced that "the 30x30 target will not be met unless IPLC territories are protected by law".

The target needs to prioritise quality over quantity, underpinned by the evidence that IPLC guardianship has been even more effective in nurturing "species abundance, genetic revitalisation and ecosystem resilience, as proven by the fact that the most of biodiversity today is in these territories".

Carino's view was strongly endorsed by another participant, Senator Loren Legarda, deputy speaker of the Philippines House of Representatives: "By honouring the traditions and knowledge of IPLCs, we would have delivered a double benefit of alleviating poverty and protecting our natural capital."

Brian O'Donnell, CFN director, said that, "Asean has shown the way in how governments and indigenous people can conserve biodiversity and protect nature.

"CFN can learn and partner with you on how conservation targets that are rights-based and aligned with financing in the right places and done in the manner that advances rights can be essential to meet the biodiversity and climate change goals."

As always, funding is key to success. And in New York, last month, nine philanthropic organisations pledged US$5 billion to advance the 30x30 initiative by supporting protected areas and indigenous stewardship of their territories.

The announcement was welcomed by Theresa Mundita Lim, executive director, ACB: "This funding announcement... sends an important message to countries ready to protect or conserve additional land or sea areas that there will be new funding to help them."

And, as he opened the CBD meeting in Kunming this week, Chinese President Xi Jinping initiated a new fund to protect biodiversity in developing nations with an initial pledge of US$233 million, inviting other countries to contribute.

Support for CFN's stance on IPLCs and the prospective funding provides Asean member states greater leeway to play their rightful role in global biodiversity governance.

This would include the call by the Malaysian Energy and Natural Resources Minister Datuk Seri Takiyuddin Hassan during the high-level segment on Oct 13 that GBF should be "ambitious but flexible".

The writer is ambassador and science adviser to the Campaign for Nature and former science adviser to the prime minister of Malaysia