



OFFICIATING SPEECH

YB DATO' SRI ARTHUR JOSEPH KURUP
MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY (NRES)

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON TROPICAL FORESTRY 2026
(TF2026)

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LE MERIDIEN KOTA KINABALU
SABAH

[SALUTATION TO BE UPDATED]

Good morning dan Salam Malaysia Madani.

1. It gives me great pleasure to be with you this morning for the International Conference on Tropical Forestry 2026, or TF2026. On behalf of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability (NRES), I congratulate Universiti Malaysia Sabah particularly the Faculty of Tropical Forestry together with KTS Plantation Sdn. Bhd. and all partners for convening this important international gathering.
2. With approximately 200 delegates and a strong programme of keynote, oral and poster presentations, TF2026 is more than a scientific conference, it is

a platform where knowledge can be translated into partnership and action. I am also pleased to note that this is the third edition of this biennial conference series, following earlier editions in 2021 and 2024. Its theme, “Tropical Forestry and Sustainability for Human Society”, is both timely and highly relevant.

Ladies and gentlemen,

ROLE OF FORESTS AND MALAYSIA'S CURRENT ACHIEVEMENT

3. Tropical forests are among humanity's most valuable natural assets. They regulate climate, protect water catchments, conserve soils, store carbon, support livelihoods and provide habitats for extraordinary

biological diversity. For Malaysia, forests are also part of our national identity and development journey. Nowhere is this more evident than here in Sabah with its remarkable tropical rainforests, mangroves, wildlife and globally significant landscapes.

4. Malaysia has consistently recognised that development and conservation must advance together. Since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Malaysia has maintained the commitment of keeping at least 50 per cent of our land area under forest and tree cover. Today, that figure stands at 54.40 per cent, **or Seventeen Point Nine Nine (17.99) million hectares.** Notably, Sabah and Sarawak each

maintain more than 60 per cent forest and tree cover, with Sabah at ***Sixty-Two-Point Five Three percent*** (62.53%) equivalent to ***Four Point Six Three Million hectares*** (4.63 million hectares) of its land area, followed by Sarawak at ***Sixty-One-Point Five Two Percent (61.52%)*** or ***Seven Point Six Four million hectares*** (7.64 million hectares). This reflects sustained commitment by the Federal and State Governments, forestry agencies, communities and various stakeholders.

5. Our sustainable forest management system continues to be strengthened through policy, legislation, science and certification. Malaysia has close to 5.9 million hectares of forests certified

under the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS) endorsed by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). This demonstrates that well-governed production forestry can generate economic value while maintaining environmental and social safeguards.

Ladies and gentlemen,

MALAYSIA'S FOREST & BIODIVERSITY RELATED INITIATIVES

6. We have also invested in restoration and ecological connectivity. The Central Forest Spine in Peninsular Malaysia and the Heart of Borneo initiative in Sabah and Sarawak are

important landscape level approaches that connect habitats, protect biodiversity and strengthen ecological resilience.

7. Our national greening effort has also delivered a significant achievement. The 100 million Tree-Planting Campaign, implemented from 2021 to 2025, exceeded its target, with *One Hundred Thirty-Seven Million* (137 million) trees planted nationwide.
8. Sabah contributed *Twenty-Seven Point One Nine million* (27.19 million) trees, making it the second-highest contributing state after Sarawak and accounting for almost one-fifth of the national total. This reflects Sabah's

strong contribution to forest restoration, rehabilitation and the national greening agenda.

9. Malaysia is equally committed to protecting forestry and biodiversity through the Malaysia Policy on Forestry and National Policy on Biological Diversity (NPBD) 2022–2030. We are also aligning our NPBD 2022-2030 policy action with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Malaysia aims to conserve at least 20 per cent of terrestrial areas and inland waters by 2030 through effectively managed protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures.

10. We are also strengthening the financial foundation for conservation. The Ecological Fiscal Transfer for Biodiversity Conservation provides incentives to State Governments to protect and expand areas of ecological importance.
11. The national allocation increased from RM150 million in 2023 to RM200 million in 2024 and RM250 million annually in 2025 and 2026. For Sabah, **Thirty Point Seven million ringgit** (RM30.7 million) has been allocated in 2026, bringing the State's cumulative allocation to approximately **One Hundred Fifty-Seven Point Zero Five million ringgit** (RM157.05 million) since 2019.

12. This recognises Sabah's important role in safeguarding forests, biodiversity and ecosystem services that benefit the nation as a whole.
13. Our forests are also central to Malaysia's climate response. Malaysia's first Biennial Transparency Report (BTR1) confirms that the land use, land-use change and forestry sector is a major national carbon sink. Sustainable forest management, conservation and restoration are therefore fundamental to our climate action.

Ladies and gentlemen,

INTERNATIONAL

LEVEL

COMMITMENTS

14. At the regional level, Malaysia continues to contribute through ASEAN cooperation on forestry and biodiversity, including the Heart of Borneo partnership, and through platforms promoting sustainable forest management, legal and sustainable timber trade, forest restoration and knowledge exchange across the Asia-Pacific.
15. At the international level, Malaysia remains actively engaged under the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), the Convention on Biological

Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

16. We continue to support approaches that recognise national circumstances, uphold sustainable forest management, strengthen biodiversity conservation and ensure that global environmental commitments are practical, inclusive and supported by adequate means of implementation.

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF TROPICAL FORESTRY

17. These achievements must not make us complacent. Tropical forestry is becoming more complex. Climate

change, deforestation, forest degradation, biodiversity loss, changing land-use pressures and new expectations relating to carbon markets, traceability and sustainability are reshaping the sector. This is why science and research matter more than ever.

18. The scope of TF2026 reflects this reality, spanning forest ecology, biodiversity, forest protection, management, policy, technology, social forestry, agroforestry, nature tourism, plantation forestry and forest products. Together, these fields form an important knowledge base for the future of tropical forestry.

19. I therefore encourage researchers and universities to ensure that excellent research also addresses real world challenges by strengthening policy and management, improving monitoring and restoration, protecting species and supporting sustainable livelihoods. Technology, including remote sensing, GIS, LiDAR and artificial intelligence (AI) can complement field expertise and strengthen monitoring, enforcement and decision-making.

20. We must also never lose sight of people's importance. Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) are important custodians of forest landscapes. Sustainable forestry must be inclusive, respect local

knowledge and deliver tangible benefits to communities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

CLOSING

21. Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) has an especially important role in this endeavour. Sabah itself is a living laboratory for tropical forestry and biodiversity. I hope TF2026 will deepen collaboration between UMS, government agencies, forestry departments, industry, civil society and international research institutions and that the partnerships formed here will continue long after this conference concludes.

22. To our young researchers and students, use this opportunity fully. Ask difficult questions, build networks across disciplines and borders, and ensure that your knowledge contributes to solutions that are scientifically sound, inclusive and relevant to society.

23. I once again congratulate UMS, the Faculty of Tropical Forestry, the co-host, strategic partners, sponsors and the organising committee for successfully convening TF2026. I wish all delegates productive discussions, meaningful collaborations and a warm stay here in Kota Kinabalu.

24. May this conference strengthen our collective determination to ensure that tropical forests continue to support biodiversity, climate resilience, sustainable livelihoods and human well-being for generations to come.

25. With that, it gives me great pleasure to officially declare the International Conference on Tropical Forestry 2026 open.

Thank you.