



MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

OPENING REMARKS

NIK NAZMI NIK AHMAD

**MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

FOR

**LUNCHEON EVENT ON FORESTS AS AN ASSET: ADVANCING
SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP THROUGH STRATEGIC
CONSERVATION INITIATIVES**

26 FEBRUARY 2025 (WEDNESDAY)

SHERATON IMPERIAL KUALA LUMPUR HOTEL

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh, a very good morning and Salam Malaysia Madani.

Yang Berbahagia Datuk Nor Yahati Awang

Deputy Secretary General (Environmental Sustainability)
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability

Yang Berusaha Dr. Yasmin Rasyid

Chairwoman & Board of Trustees
Malaysia Forest Fund

Yang Berbahagia Dato' Mohamed Shah Redza Hussein

Chief Executive Officer
Malaysia Forest Fund

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

INTRODUCTION

1. A warm welcome to everyone and thank you for joining us at this special luncheon on **Strategic Conservation Initiatives: Advancing Sustainable Leadership by Viewing Forests as Assets.**

2. Forests are often called the lungs of the Earth, serving as vital regulators of our climate, protectors of biodiversity, and sustainers of countless livelihoods. Malaysia has been identified as one of 17 megadiverse countries that hosts 70 percent of the known species of the world. Biodiversity, as we know, is an invaluable asset in maintaining the natural environment. Our forests are not only teeming with unparalleled biodiversity but are also deeply intertwined with our cultural identity and economic prosperity.

3. Our primary challenges in forest conservation include deforestation due to infrastructure development, settlements, and the expansion of agriculture for food security purposes. The loss of forests is not just a loss of trees but a significant threat to global biodiversity, climate stability, and the economic foundations that support communities worldwide. Tackling these pressing issues demands the implementation of innovative and impactful financial strategies that can drive meaningful change, not only for Malaysia but also for the broader ASEAN region as we lead the way in addressing environmental challenges within Southeast Asia.

4. As the current Chair of ASEAN, Malaysia acknowledges the significant role that environmental conservation plays in regional development. Securing sufficient funding for environmental conservation has remained a persistent challenge in Malaysia, but we are committed to securing the necessary resources to protect and preserve our natural heritage for future generations.

5. We understand that the importance of environmental conservation cannot be overstated—not just for the biodiversity it sustains but for the well-being of all ASEAN nations. Malaysia is uniquely positioned to lead ASEAN’s efforts in ensuring sustainable development, and this requires collaboration across borders and sectors.

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. Over the past few years, we have made strides in exploring diverse funding avenues, including public-private partnerships, international grants, and government allocations. However, we recognise that securing consistent and long-term funding remains a complex issue. It is not just a matter of financial resources but also a shared responsibility that requires the collective effort of the government, the private sector, and the public.

7. Moving forward, we will continue to explore innovative financing mechanisms, such as green bonds, sukuk, carbon tax and sustainable investments. These efforts are aimed at ensuring that our conservation initiatives are adequately funded while simultaneously creating sustainable economic opportunities for the nation.

8. To address this challenge, the Malaysia Forest Fund introduced the Forest Conservation Certificate (FCC) in May 2024, a groundbreaking initiative designed to channel private sector investments into forest conservation projects.

9. By leveraging financial resources from corporations and other stakeholders, the FCC aims to support sustainable forestry practices, habitat restoration, and the protection of biodiversity. This novel approach not only addresses the funding gap but also promotes greater collaboration between government bodies, private entities, and local communities in safeguarding Malaysia's rich forest resources. Through the FCC, the Fund envisions a future where conservation efforts are adequately supported, ensuring that Malaysia's forests continue to thrive for generations to come.

Ladies and gentlemen,

10. Advancing sustainable leadership requires a paradigm shift in how we view our natural resources. For too long, forests have been seen merely as a commodity to be exploited, rather than as a vital asset to be preserved and managed for the long-term benefit of our nation. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability firmly believes that forests should be regarded not just as a resource to be harvested, but as an invaluable asset—one that supports biodiversity, regulates climate, provides livelihoods, and strengthens our economy.

By viewing forests in this way, we shift towards a model of sustainable leadership that recognises the intrinsic value of conservation and sustainable management practices.

11. We must move beyond short-term gains and focus on the long-term benefits that forests offer. Sustainable leadership means taking a holistic approach, where the health of our forests is integrated into national development strategies, corporate responsibility frameworks, and local community initiatives. This vision calls for forward-thinking policies, innovative partnerships, and a collective commitment to ensure that the value of our forests is not only protected but enhanced for future generations.

12. By viewing forests as assets, we create opportunities for new, sustainable industries, promote eco-tourism, and improve the resilience of our landscapes against the challenges of climate change. Let us all take part in this shift—together, we can lead the way in making forest conservation an essential cornerstone of sustainable growth.

13. As we navigate this challenge, I urge all stakeholders to work hand in hand. The time to act is now. Our natural resources are finite, and our window of opportunity to protect them is shrinking. Together, we can build a future where environmental conservation is not only a priority but also a shared responsibility. With that, I wish you all a fruitful and rewarding session ahead. Thank you.