

# The Brunei HoB Perspective for the Land Use Management in Designated Brunei HOB Area

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## *Abstract of Oral Presentation*

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*Brunei Darussalam is considered among the top ten most forested nations in the world because of its pristine natural forests protected by legislation. The country is committed to maintain this international prestige as well as its iconic green image while at the same time strive for the steadily increase in economic growth through multi-sectoral development. Being a small country with a land area of 576,532 hectares and limited land resource, it is inevitable for the Brunei Government to implement proper planning and sustainable land use management as an integral development approach to ensure the optimum utilization of the country's rich natural resources by all sectors of society.*

*The Brunei Heart of Borneo (HoB) initiative plays a vital responsibility in role-modeling sustainable development in the country through sustainable forest management (SFM) and encourages green sectoral development within the designated Brunei HoB area that covers 58% of the total land area of the country. The Brunei HoB will provide the appropriate management and guiding principles for all developmental projects in order to sustain natural resources production and at the same time ensure the protection and conservation of the natural environment.*

*In view that majority of the country's land is still covered by forests, Brunei HoB also intends to influence the development initiatives adjacent and outside of the designated HoB area. It is important to implement a well-balanced development and observance to the principles of sustainable development in order to mitigate the adverse impact of infrastructure development within the city itself. This will also ensure the ecological connectivity between the HoB area and its proximity and as a result, the whole area of Brunei Darussalam will able to maintain a highly complex and diverse ecosystems within the continuous green biological infrastructure. Under the Brunei HoB initiative, the land will be managed and developed in accordance with the relevant laws and ensure that the agency or agencies mandated to develop the land shall be guided as to adopt the proper development practices especially those that associated with the conversion of forests to other land uses. The HoB National Council comprising of the relevant ministries was established with His Majesty's consent reflecting His Majesty's support in pursuit of HoB Declaration signed by the responsible ministers from Bornean Governments in 2007 that provides the forum aimed to align development policies and formulate the policy directives for all development projects within the designated HoB area.*

*Basically, land use management within the HoB area takes into account the three basic pillars of sustainable development which include economic, environmental and social considerations and for Brunei perspective, development is incorporated into the three basic pillars.*

## Salient points.....

### 1. Forest Resources

- a. Brunei Darussalam covers a total land area of 576,532 hectares and has gained international prestige for having a world class tropical rain forests of which majority is still in pristine condition and protected by legislation. As part of the strategies in enhancing the forest conservation efforts of the country, Brunei Darussalam entered into a tripartite agreement between the three Borneo countries to conserve a large tract of forests and natural landscapes within the island of Borneo, thus, the Heart of Borneo (HoB) initiative.
- b. HoB is considered as one of the largest sub-regional forest conservation initiatives within the region. As such, Brunei Darussalam has designated 58% of the country's land area to be managed under the conservative management principles of the Brunei HoB initiative. The designated area for HoB management covers important natural resources of the country and is characterized by primary and secondary tropical rainforests, unique natural biological landscapes, agricultural lands, and built-up areas with local communities. These natural resources respond to the raw material needs of the local industries to include timber for wood-based industry; rice, fruits and vegetable farming as part of domestic food security programs; land for industrial zone development; oil and gas production opportunities; residential housing development; ecological tourism; biological prospecting; and other developmental opportunities.
- c. In view of the aggressive economic programs being implemented by the Government, it is inevitable that there will be some overlapping interest in pursuing common development goals. As such, a holistic management approach for land-use management should be implemented through the Brunei Heart of Borneo initiative.

### 2. Brunei HoB Land Use Management Considerations

- a. For forestry sector, the implementation of the Brunei HoB initiative has complemented and strengthened the national forest conservation policies of the country that are translated into various programs aimed towards sustainable forest management as a model of sustainable development. Basically, Brunei HoB initiative is governed by the HoB National Council represented by various relevant ministries and thus, a multi-sectoral forum. The HoB National Council served as the key and most strategic point to formulate and implement a balanced-decision making in determining the optimum utilization of Brunei HoB land resources. All sectoral developmental interests are considered at the council to ensure the appropriate resource utilization that would not compromise the integrity of the natural environment and at the same time complement the needs of other related **sectoral development**.

- b. The Brunei HoB initiative, although aimed at preserving and conserving the country's natural resources for the people, does not hinder or eliminate the utilization of natural resources. Brunei HoB intends to utilize natural resources including the limited land resources in a sustainable manner without compromising the integrity of the resource and its natural capacity to provide the basic goods and services to all level of society and to future generations, as well. It deals with the application of science, traditional knowledge, and modern technologies to ensure that resources utilization has the least impact to the environment and within the limits of its natural production.
- c. Generally, Brunei HoB considers and adapted the three pillars of sustainable development in its decision-making processes and activities. It takes into account the social, economic and environmental considerations in order to arrive at the best land-use option and sustainable production of natural resources, goods and services.

### **3. Brunei HoB for Social Development**

- a. Social development as a result of land use development remains an important consideration. The Brunei HoB supports land use development that would lead to organizing human energies and activities at a higher levels to achieve greater results. It is a common notion that society develops in response to the interaction between people (individual or community) and natural resources.
- b. Under the Brunei HoB, individuals or communities are encouraged to develop all developable lands and gain experience and knowledge in achieving government social and economic goals. Active people's participation in applicable land and natural resources are welcome and considered important drivers for sustainable development. As such, people's participation in the form of public consultation is expected to influence stakeholders and share control over development initiatives including some recommendations for decision-making about the resources affecting them.
- c. Brunei HoB increases the recognition of the native's traditional and cultural as to sustain their identity and rights living harmony in the forests.

### **4. Brunei HoB for Sustainable Economy**

- a. The Brunei HoB strongly supports the aggressive economic diversification drive of the country. Although the country's economy remains to be primarily dependent on oil and gas industry, other sectors development are

deemed important due to its impact on the livelihood of people and the country's economic growth.

- b. Considering the current condition of the natural resources and biological landscape of the areas under the Brunei HoB management, there is a large economic potential for primary sector development. Primary sector developments may include forestry and agriculture economic activities to include some related industries. Current developments within the HoB area include agricultural production for food security, sustainable timber production for domestic wood demand, ecological tourism development for local livelihood and additional foreign exchange earnings, and biological prospecting activities. However, proper balance, land-use zoning and long-term viability should be observed before considering such economic activities.
- c. Indirect financial revenue can also be considered through carbon credits and payment for environmental services. Joint collaborations, researches and studies shall be conducted in order to establish the required baseline information for these purposes. It is an accepted fact that the HoB natural environment supports the economic activities of the other sectors, especially the oil and gas industry. The capacity of the forests to store the carbon can offset the hydrocarbon industry in the country.
- d. Other sectoral development such as infrastructural development may also be considered depending on land-use compatibility, social acceptability and acceptable environmental impacts and thus, the mandatory requirement of EIA is most welcome effort.

## **5. Brunei HoB for Environmental Protection and Conservation**

- a. The Brunei HoB's main objective is to conserve the forest and other forestry resources, including natural habitats, biological diversity for the enjoyment and environmental benefits for all levels of society. As such, land use management aimed to conserve, preserved and maintain the natural biological landscape of the area is a top priority within the designated HoB area. Size really matters and therefore, other acceptable land-use activities such as re-establishment of forest connectivity and rehabilitation of degraded areas through afforestation, reforestation and other science-based rehabilitative means.
- b. Areas that are designated for economic and social purposes shall observe mitigation measures of highest standard to ensure that such activities will not have negative impact to the environment and natural ecosystem. As such, an appropriate environmental impact assessment system might be needed to be in place in order to safeguard the environment from infrastructure and critically development projects. More importantly, the social and aesthetic value of the nature and forest will not be lost as a result.

## **6. Brunei HoB for Institutional Development**

- a. The Brunei HoB initiative supports institutional development in order to cope up with the fast-phased development in the international arena when it comes to environmental initiatives. Brunei HoB represents a holistic view and approaches that would respond to a wider inter-sectoral concern of the country that would further lead in the establishment of environmentally sound standard procedures in aid of policy formulation.
- b. Brunei HoB provides high-level political leadership and support to the projects and R & D within the project implementation framework, PIF that give immediate impact to the country's economic growth especially to those that can really promote the wise of the natural resources including land resources.
- c. At the same time it maintains the country's international prestige as the iconic environmental leadership through its present position as among the top ten of the forested nation in the world and yet to achieve and to be recognized as one of the mega-diverse countries in the world.

## **7. Acknowledgment**

- a. On behalf of Brunei HoB Initiative, the HoB Centre would like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to the conference's organizer and congratulate for the successful and timely organization of the conference. We wish the conference will of the benefit to the participants and Brunei Darussalam as a whole.

*Contact address:  
Brunei Heart of Borneo Centre  
Ground Floor,  
Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources Building  
Jalan Menteri Besar, Berakas  
Brunei Darussalam.  
Tel: +6732380778 / +6782381013 ext 2034, 36, 38*