

# Heart of Borneo: Background info for media

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## **1/ What is Heart of Borneo (HoB)?**

The Heart of Borneo covers more than 22 million hectares of equatorial rain forest across the countries of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia. It includes some of the most biologically diverse habitats on earth, and is one of only two places on earth where elephants, orang-utans, rhinoceros and clouded leopards share the same territory.

Borneo's cultural diversity is as distinct and varied as the island's animal and plant life. In Kalimantan (Indonesia) alone, 142 different languages are believed still to be in use today. Many people depend directly on the forest for edible and medicinal plants; fish; meat; construction materials and water. As the headwaters of the island's major rivers lie in Borneo's central highlands, protection is critical to ensuring reliable clean water supplies to a large number of human settlements, and the thriving industries that have developed in coastal urban centers.

## **2/ What is the Heart of Borneo Declaration**

In February 2007, the governments of Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia signed the Heart of Borneo Declaration which commits the three governments to one conservation vision to ensure the effective management of forest resources and conservation of a network of protected areas, productive forests and other sustainable land uses.

The declaration is supported under important regional and international agreements such as ASEAN Association of Sth East Asian Nations, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines East Asia Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA), Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD).

## **3/ Why was the Declaration so important?**

The Declaration was important for the simple fact that it brought together the three governments under a common commitment. The island of Borneo is no stranger to conflicts and over the past century there have been major disputes and conflicts between the three countries. Importantly the commitment includes participation and strong buy-in from the local administrative units within each country. That is to say, the agreement isn't one that is just made by the governments in the capital cities. We see the provinces and district governments in Indonesia as well as the state governments in Malaysia playing leading roles in determining how the initiative proceeds. Another reason is that the Declaration just doesn't commit the three governments to conservation, but also to sustainable development. This is not common and is extremely important component of the trilateral agreement. The private sector (timber, palm oil, mining, and pulp industries) is a major stakeholder in the area within the Heart of Borneo. Looking at business as a force for good, as a strong partner within the commitments of the Heart of Borneo makes this a unique agreement.

#### **4/ Would the Heart of Borneo be different without the Declaration**

**Case 1:** It is difficult to speculate but we have seen the power of the political commitments made under the Heart of Borneo Declaration. In 2006, there was a proposal to develop the world's largest palm oil plantation along the border between Indonesia and Malaysia. This would have brought down 2 million hectares of pristine tropical rainforests, cutting through the heart of the island's two largest national parks, turning this very special wild area into a vast landscape of neatly manicured, unnatural plantations. It would have spelled doom for the orangutans, clouded leopards, hornbills and other amazing creatures that call this vast border region home. Additionally, the proposal would have brought with it immense and questionable changes in socioeconomic conditions for local communities and indigenous peoples. Thankfully, the governments were just on the verge of signing the Heart of Borneo Declaration and this provided a pressure point, or perhaps the courage, to reorient the proposal into a more environmentally and socioeconomically direction.

**Case 2:** In 2007, just after the Declaration was signed, the Indonesian government launched a proposal to develop a new road network literally through the Heart of Borneo. As with the mega-palm oil scheme, this project was advertised under the flag of rural development. But again the potential benefits of the project were far over shadowed by the likely costs and long-term impacts. The Declaration again provided a touchstone for the governments, as well as a beacon for civil society to refer to, forcing them to consider the consequences of such decisions. Interestingly, the end result was a commitment by international donors and finance agencies to invest in and support the Indonesian government to ensure that infrastructure development in Heart of Borneo comes with robust environmental and social safeguards.

#### **5/ What is the Heart of Borneo Initiative**

Internationally, WWF is using its global network to focus efforts to support the Declaration through its Heart of Borneo (HoB) Initiative. Amongst its many other activities, WWF is working with key regional forums such as the Association of Southeast Asian National (ASEAN) and regional institutions such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to leverage support for delivering on the HoB commitments.

At the local and national level, the three governments have mapped out a course of conservation and management of the Heart of Borneo around the key areas of protected area and trans-boundary management, eco-tourism, capacity building and sustainable economic development.

WWF in Malaysia and Indonesia are supporting these efforts, working very closely with government agencies to turn the paper declaration into tangible on-ground action, district by district, region by region to fulfil the conservation promise of the Heart of Borneo Declaration

The HoB Initiative operates within three broad strategies

##### **Strategy 1 – Aligning policy and management across the three countries.**

WWF is working with government partners to prepare new decisions on key areas of trilateral cooperation such as governance, trans-boundary conservation, climate change, sustainable financing and ecotourism. WWF is mainstreaming the Heart of Borneo priorities into key regional forums such as ASEAN and APEC agendas on trade, economic development and cooperation.

##### **Strategy 2 – Catalyzing private sector transformation via Green Business Network.**

An estimated 50% of land within the HoB lies in private hands so the private sector has a key role to play in delivering the HoB vision of conservation and sustainable land use. Working primarily through the establishment of a

'Green Business Network', this strategy will raise awareness in the private sector of the vital role it can play in delivering the HoB vision. A series of sector based reports will kick this work off, demonstrating the impact of each sector and calls for action for improvement. The Network ultimately aims to become a driving force for reducing the footprint of companies that operate, source and finance business in the HoB.

### **Strategy 3 – Innovative and long-term finance**

In order to achieve the far-reaching commitments envisaged in the HoB Declaration, long-term financing schemes, equitably shared amongst stakeholders, need to be developed. The focus of strategy three is to develop income generating schemes based on the natural and social capital values of the HoB. Several financing schemes are being explored, including Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES), Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) financing schemes. The goal is to develop incentive mechanisms that maintain and enhance the natural and social capital of the HoB.

### **6/ What are the remaining threats to the HOB?**

There are many challenges, and the experience from the past shows us that the natural capital harbored within the Heart of Borneo is of great commercial interest. The island of Borneo has seen an immense amount of change over the past century. In the early 1900s almost all of the island was still draped in untouched, wild, vast tropical rainforests. Things began to change in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and by the 1980s major commercial operations were eating away at the once untouchable and unpenetrable forests of Borneo. The last 20 years of the century saw more timber cut and traded from Borneo than from the entirety of the Amazon and Congo regions. Borneo is an island, the Amazon and Congo are the two largest tropical rainforests in the world and situated on huge continents! Timber companies, palm oil plantations, mining operations, hydropower and other infrastructure developments are all key players within the Heart of Borneo landscape. WWF has developed a proactive approach to cooperatively working with the private sector, as our experience has shown that far greater results can be realized and sustained when business, government and civil society work toward a common goal. We have high expectations in 2010 for demonstrating new public-private partnerships to deliver the vision of the Heart of Borneo.