

Press Release:

Response to the Article titled *'End of funding dims hopes for a Sumatran forest targeted by palm oil growers'*, (hereinafter Mongabay Article) published in Mongabayon 9 November 2018

JAMBI, 17 November 2018 -- The Hutan Harapan Initiative is a Partnership of three organisations - Burung Indonesia, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and BirdLife International - who in 2004 formed the Indonesia Forest Conservation Foundation known as Yayasan Konservasi Ekosistem Hutan Indonesia (KEHI hereinafter 'we'/'our'/'us') to provide the strategic direction for work to be undertaken in the Hutan Harapan Ecosystem Restoration Concessions (ERC) which cover 98,555 ha in South Sumatra and Jambi Provinces. The Yayasan/Foundation is legally registered and received approval from the Ministry of Law and Human Rights through Ministry Decree number: C-490. HT. 01.02.2005. The two Ecosystem Restoration Concession licences that constitute Hutan Harapan were the first to be issued in Indonesia and we are immensely proud to have been given the opportunity by the Government of Indonesia to support forest conservation in Indonesia through this innovative mechanism. The ERC approach has now been replicated many times over with 16 licenses now granted, covering over 600, 000 ha of forest in Indonesia.

The following is our response to the Mongabay Article and addresses specific issues and concerns raised there in.

The Hutan Harapan Initiative was developed as a response to the need to provide an alternative to the conversion of Indonesia's production forests to oil palm plantations and other uses. Hutan Harapan represents more than 20% of the remaining Sumatran dry low land tropical forest -a forest 'island' surrounded by plantations. Despite past intensive logging activity, the area is still rich in biodiversity. Sumatran lowland rainforests make up one of only 36 global biodiversity hotspots and Hutan Harapan provides an important habitat for over 1,350 documented species; 133 of which are globally threatened including several endangered species such as the Sumatran tiger and Sumatran elephant. Hutan Harapan also plays an important role as a carbon sink, vital in the climate

change agenda, helping Indonesia meet global commitments to reduce carbon emissions. As a unique forest type with global biodiversity value, it is an integral part of the natural heritage of Indonesia and its people. The arguments for continuing to protect and restore this very special place are stronger than ever due to the variety of threats faced by lowland rainforests and biodiversity more generally in Sumatra. We fervently believe that the continued existence of good forest makes it an endeavor worthy of intensive continuing support.

“The challenges to the ecological integrity of Hutan Harapan are numerous: forest clearing for oil palm, encroachment, illegal logging and hunting. These challenges are the same as those faced by other important forest areas in Sumatra including several formally protected areas. In a region with great pressure on the environment, our efforts at Hutan Harapan have slowed down the rate of deforestation while simultaneously instituting measures to further protect and enhance the forest ecosystem’s high biodiversity value,” said **Lisman Sumardjani**, Director of Hutan Harapan. Although the threats are not to be underestimated, the management of Hutan Harapan has been successful (relative to many other important forest areas in Sumatra and given specific challenges associated with the site) especially in implementing a variety of community engagement and livelihood strategies and innovative conservation approaches to limit the impact of land encroachment and forest clearance. These strategies and approaches have been undertaken in tandem with national and local government and with corporate support; they have benefited local people and they are models that can be replicated elsewhere across Indonesia.

Over the years Hutan Harapan has received funding from national and international organisations and private sector companies that share our vision of the site. At the same time, the Government of Indonesia has continued to improve the legal and regulatory framework for ERCs, supported Hutan Harapan on key initiatives to strengthen site management and re-emphasized Hutan Harapan’s importance as a haven for biodiversity. Given the ecological value of the site, its historical place as Indonesia’s first ERC initiative and given the approaches that we have implemented to the benefit of both local people and biodiversity, we are extremely proud of what has been achieved at Hutan Harapan and are committed to supporting it in the long term and paving the way for a sustainable future.

We have been preparing for the end of funding from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) for some time. Other funding lines are in place and there has been active and sustained engagement with other donors to ensure a smooth transition in funding support. The future funding model is based on a variety of funding streams and the Partnerships working with key stakeholders

to ensure that Hutan Harapan will continue to be the flagship of ecosystem restoration in Indonesia. Plans have also been implemented to ensure that day to day operations are not compromised during this transition. In the longer run, alternative approaches will be considered to further optimise our conservation efforts and explore cost-effective solutions to address specific on-the-ground challenges.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the Government of Indonesia for giving us the opportunity to protect and manage Hutan Harapan and thank it for its instrumental support and guidance in relation to our work there, which we will continue to pursue. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the government of Denmark for its support which has been fundamental to the success of this initiative.

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