

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak Contribution Towards Biodiversity and Protected Area Management

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Abstracts

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Article 13 addresses the aspects of public education that requires the Parties to promote and encourage understanding on the conservation of biological diversity; and cooperate in developing educational programmes with respect to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. During the recent 7th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 7), held in Kuala Lumpur in 2004, the Parties had reaffirmed the CBD to include the biological diversity of mountain ecosystems, the role of protected areas in the maintenance of biological diversity and to implement programmes for reduction in the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010. However, it is also known that the lack of accessible knowledge, public education and awareness may lead to degradation or total loss of biodiversity and improper management of protected areas.

The Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), which is located in the heartland of one of the richest biodiversities in the world, was established on 24 December 1992 after the declaration of Vision 2020 and the Rio CBD. The Faculty of Resource Science and Technology (FRST) is one of the two pioneering faculties in Unimas which was established in July 1993. The focus of academic and research programmes at the faculty is in areas related to the science, management and sustainable utilization of natural resources in Sarawak. Students can specialise in science and management of fauna and flora, aquatic biology, biotechnology and resource chemistry. In July 1994, the Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation (IBEC) was launched. The main objectives of the IBEC are to promote an understanding on the ecological principles and benefits that biodiversity holds for humanity; and to promote the wise management and use of the nation's biotic wealth in ways that do not adversely affect the environment. IBEC programmes in teaching and research are structured at the postgraduate and post-doctoral levels that will promote the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge in environmental science and technology. Thus, the overall programmes in FRST and IBEC are biodiversity focus towards establishing a body of highly educated, skilled and dedicated natural resource managers, biological conservationists, environmental educators and teachers capable of contributing and providing leadership to the sustainable development of Malaysia's biotic wealth.

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