

**PRESS RELEASE:**

***Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim: New Executive Director of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity***



**Passing of the ACB key.** Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim, fourth ACB Executive Director, receives the ACB ceremonial key from Atty. Roberto V. Oliva, during the Turnover and Oath-taking Ceremony for the New Executive Director of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity on 17 April 2018.

After half a decade, a new Executive Director for the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) has been named—Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim.

On 17 April 2018, the Turnover and Oath-taking Ceremony for the new Executive Director was held at the ACB Headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines. Dignitaries from various organizations, such as Dr. Megat Sany Megat Ahmad Supian, Undersecretary of the Biodiversity and Forestry Management Division of Malaysia's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; Dr. Vong Sok, Assistant Director for the Environment Division of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, ASEAN Secretariat; Mr. Aian Caringal, Director of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, Office of ASEAN Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs; Hon. Caesar P. Perez, Mayor of Los Baños, Laguna; Dr. Portia G. Lapitan, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of the Philippines Los Baños, Ms. Nonita M. Caguioa, Assistant Secretary for Mining Concerns, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR); Dr.

Bighani M. Manipula, Assistant Director, Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB); and Mr. Giovanni Serritella, Attaché Manager for Environment and Climate Change, Delegation of the European Union to the Philippines, were present during the ceremony.

The event was also attended by staunch supporters and partners of ACB from various local and international organizations, such as Dr. Berthold Seibert, Programme Director of GIZ; Ms. Crisanta Rodriguez, the new Director of the DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau; Dr. Gil C. Saguiguit, Jr., Director of Science Education for Agriculture and Development; Ms. Aimee Gonzales, Executive Director of Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA); and Mr. Oliver Frith, Head of Business Development, International Rice Research Institute, to name a few.

“The threats to biodiversity continue. We cannot rest. We have made significant steps in combatting biodiversity loss. Let us keep moving forward and seize the moment,” said Atty. Roberto V. Oliva, the outgoing ACB Executive Director during his final speech.

“It is hard for me to do justice to all that he has achieved during his term,” remarked Mr. Serritella as he delivered his message during the Ceremony. “Mr. Oliva leaves a huge legacy behind, a legacy of an ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity that transformed over the years. From a project, into an agency, and under his leadership, into a sustainable institution,” he continued.

Representing Dato Sri Azizan Bin Ahmad, Malaysia’s Secretary General of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, ASOEN Chairperson and Chairperson of the ACB Governing Board (GB), Dr. Megat Sany expressed his gratitude to Atty. Oliva and welcomed the new Executive Director. “Simply, the fate of ASEAN biodiversity rests in your hands. We look up to your directions of putting the Centre at venues on which it will rise up against challenges and put to work solutions for the myriad of environmental problems that beset us. On behalf of the 10 ASEAN Member States, we commit our support to your leadership as the new ACB Executive Director,” said Dr. Megat Sany.

Dr. Sok also extended his congratulations to the new Executive Director. “We firmly believe in your capability, given your previous experience and familiarity with the issue of nature conservation and biodiversity in ASEAN and global fora. We are confident that you carry the torch with your passion and commitment.”

To formally turnover the Centre’s leadership, Atty. Oliva handed a symbolic key to Dr. Lim. This was followed by the oath-taking ceremony, which was officiated by Dr. Megat Sany.

Dr. Lim, in her acceptance speech, chose to share to the guests the plans she has for ACB, and how she intends to perform her duties. “We need to continue our resiliency in our conservation efforts,” she said, as she named the thrusts of her administration. “We should innovate on how we can mainstream biodiversity, how we can reach out and engage as many sectors as we can, and how we can influence our leaders to use science as basis for policy and decision-making.”

Previously the highest official of the Biodiversity Management Bureau of DENR, Dr. Lim went through a selection process that involved officials from the ASEAN Members States and ASEAN Secretariat and lasted for several months.

A licensed veterinarian specializing on wildlife management and disease, Dr. Lim started her career at DENR with the Marine Turtle Conservation Program. After years of hard work, she rose to the position of Director of the Biodiversity Management Bureau, where her responsibilities included guiding national directions on protected areas and wildlife conservation, and closely working with the Philippine Congress on legislative priorities for conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity in the country, among others.

Dr. Lim has extensive national, regional, and international experience on biodiversity and protected areas. Her involvement in the ASEAN include chairing various ASEAN committees related to biodiversity and the environment, to wit, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Technical and Legal Panel Meeting Negotiating the ASEAN Framework on Access and Benefit-Sharing in 2003, 16<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity (AWGNCB) in 2006, and 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Meetings of the ASEAN Working Group on Coastal and Marine Environment (AWGCME) in 2014 and 2017, respectively.

A veteran in the ASEAN biodiversity and environment arena, she also served as Chairperson of the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Experts Group on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) Meeting in 2006, Member of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> SBSTTA Bureau (representing the Asia and the Pacific Region) and Chair of the Working Group that developed the Program of Work on Island Biodiversity.

Currently, she holds the chairmanship of the Convention on Biological Diversity Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (CBD-SBSTTA) for 2017-2018.

Dr. Lim is the fourth Executive Director of ACB, and is the first female leader to take the position.

The ACB is ASEAN's response to the challenge of biodiversity loss. The Centre responds to the needs of the ASEAN Member States in the areas of Protected Area Management, Wildlife Law Enforcement, Biodiversity Information Management, Access and Benefit Sharing, Business and Biodiversity, Climate Change and Biodiversity, Ecotourism and Biodiversity Conservation, Ecotourism and Biodiversity Conservation, Global Taxonomy Initiative, Invasive Alien Species, Payment for Ecosystem Services, and other thematic areas. It is the sole ASEAN center hosted by the Philippines. To know more about ACB, log on to [www.aseanbiodiversity.org](http://www.aseanbiodiversity.org).

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