



Inaugural Southeast Asia and the Pacific Primary Forest Annual Conference

Conference Proceedings and Outcomes Report
Advancing Regional Collaboration for Primary Forest
Conservation in Southeast Asia and the Pacific

18-20 May 2026
Luang Prabang, Lao PDR

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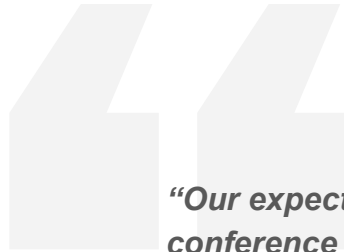
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Voices from the biome



“Our expectations from this conference are to understand the progress and our role for potential collaboration as well as to raise the voices of local communities in primary forests for conservation and sustainable forest use.”

“Most people tend to look at biodiversity as an object to be protected, we tend to forget that we also part of the biodiversity. We want everyone to help biodiversity as we want everyone to help our communities.”



Executive Summary

The Inaugural Southeast Asia and the Pacific (SEAP) Primary Forest Annual Conference was held from 18–20 May 2026 in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, under the GEF-8 Southeast Asia and the Pacific Forests Integrated Program (SEAP Forests IP). Hosted by the Department of Forestry (DOF), Ministry of Agriculture and Environment of Lao PDR, and organized by the Regional Coordination and Technical Support Project (RCP) - executed by IUCN and FAO - the Conference brought together government representatives, representatives of GEF Operational Focal Points, country project teams, Indigenous Peoples and local community (IP&LC) organizations, women and youth networks, technical experts, research institutions, regional organizations, GEF agencies, development partners, private sector representatives, financiers, and members of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG).

As the first major regional convening of the Program since its inception, the Conference served as a platform to review progress achieved during the first year of implementation, exchange knowledge and experiences among countries and partners, consult stakeholders on key technical outputs under development, strengthen regional collaboration, and help shape priorities for Year 2 implementation and beyond.

The conference was organized around three broad themes:

- Understanding the status, trends, and policy context of primary forests in Southeast Asia and the Pacific
- Identifying practical pathways to strengthen conservation, governance, financing, and stakeholder engagement
- Building partnerships and regional mechanisms to support long-term protection and sustainable management of primary forests

The event also provided an opportunity to strengthen linkages between the SEAP Forests IP and global biodiversity, climate, and sustainable development agendas, including the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and broader commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Conference Participation

The Conference brought together 97 participants representing ten countries within the Southeast Asia and the Pacific primary forest region, alongside regional organizations, development partners, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth networks, technical experts, research institutions, investors, and private sector representatives.

The diversity of participation was widely recognized as one of the Conference's strengths. In addition to government agencies and project partners, the event provided a dedicated platform for voices that are often underrepresented in regional forest policy discussions, including Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth, students, and local organizations. This contributed to a richer dialogue and reinforced the Program's commitment to inclusive and equitable approaches to primary forest conservation.

Key Outcomes

The Conference generated strong consensus around the importance of primary forests as globally significant ecosystems that underpin biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, water security, sustainable livelihoods, cultural values, and long-term economic wellbeing.

Participants emphasized that primary forests are irreplaceable ecosystems that require urgent and sustained action. Discussions highlighted that while progress has been made in strengthening protected area systems across the region, significant portions of primary forests remain outside formal conservation areas and continue to face pressures from agricultural expansion, infrastructure development, extractive industries, unsustainable commodity production, and climate change.

Several key outcomes emerged from the Conference.

First, participants reaffirmed the importance of regional collaboration in addressing threats that transcend national boundaries. This includes cooperation on transboundary protected and conserved areas, harmonized approaches to monitoring and reporting, knowledge exchange, policy dialogue, and collective engagement with regional and global processes, highlighting the importance of a long-term regional vision for primary forest conservation.

Second, participants recognized the growing importance of Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) as a complementary conservation approach capable of contributing to biodiversity conservation and primary forest protection beyond traditional protected area systems. Discussions highlighted the need for additional technical guidance, capacity development, and peer learning to support countries in identifying, assessing, and reporting OECMs.

Third, the Conference underscored the central role of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth, and academic institutions in achieving long-term conservation outcomes. Participants highlighted the importance of rights-based approaches, traditional knowledge systems, intergenerational engagement, gender-responsive programming, and meaningful participation in decision-making processes.

Fourth, participants identified a continuing need for improved information systems, monitoring approaches, and reporting methodologies related to primary forests.



Presentations on the Program's diagnostic studies and regional analyses highlighted significant differences in definitions, methodologies, and data availability across countries, while also demonstrating opportunities for regional collaboration and harmonization.

Fifth, the Conference highlighted the importance of addressing the underlying economic drivers of primary forest loss, including commodity production and supply chains. Participants emphasized the need to strengthen partnerships with the private sector and financial institutions to promote sustainable production systems, responsible investment, and innovative financing mechanisms that support forest conservation objectives.

Launch of the SEAP FIT Coalition

A major milestone of the Conference was the launch of the Southeast Asia and the Pacific Forest Investment and Technical Partners (SEAP FIT) Coalition.

The Coalition aims to address one of the most significant barriers to primary forest conservation in the region: the limited availability of investment-ready projects and scalable financing mechanisms.

Participants welcomed the establishment of the Coalition and recognized its potential to improve coordination, facilitate knowledge exchange, mobilize technical expertise, and enhance access to financing opportunities. The Coalition is expected to serve as an important mechanism for translating regional dialogue into practical collaboration and action.

Capacity Development and Knowledge Priorities

The Conference reviewed findings from the Program's Capacity Needs Assessment and Capacity Development Strategy. Discussions confirmed substantial demand for technical assistance and peer learning across a range of thematic areas, including protected area management, OECMs, transboundary conservation, primary forest monitoring, safeguards, gender equality, IP&LC engagement, innovative finance, and private sector engagement.

Participants broadly supported the Program's demand-driven approach to capacity development and emphasized the importance of tailoring support to national priorities and contexts. The Conference also reaffirmed the importance of establishing effective knowledge management systems, including the development of the SEAP Primary Forest Knowledge Hub as a platform for regional learning, exchange, and collaboration.

Implications for Year 2

The Conference provided important strategic guidance for the next phase of Program implementation.

Discussions reinforced the importance of strengthening support to countries through practical, demand-driven technical assistance while continuing to facilitate regional exchange and collaboration. Participants encouraged the Program to focus on areas where regional approaches can generate added value, including transboundary conservation, OECMs, knowledge management, capacity development, policy support, and innovative financing.

The Conference also highlighted the need to strengthen collaboration among Program partners, child projects, regional organizations, and other initiatives operating within the biome. Participants expressed strong interest in continued engagement through the Technical Advisory Group, the SEAP FIT Coalition, thematic working groups, and future Annual Conferences.

Participant feedback demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with the Conference and confirmed its value as a platform for regional collaboration and knowledge exchange. More than 90 percent of respondents indicated that the Conference met or exceeded their expectations, while all respondents rated the overall experience as very good or excellent. Participants highlighted the quality of discussions, diversity of perspectives, networking opportunities, and inclusive engagement processes as strengths. Survey results also confirmed strong interest in continued collaboration through the Knowledge Hub, Technical Advisory Group, and SEAP FIT Coalition, reinforcing the relevance of the priorities identified for Year 2 implementation.

Conclusion

The Inaugural SEAP Primary Forest Annual Conference achieved its objectives and marked an important milestone in the implementation of the SEAP Forests Integrated Program.

The Conference demonstrated strong regional commitment to the conservation and sustainable management of primary forests and provided a valuable platform for dialogue, learning, and partnership-building among a diverse group of stakeholders.

Most importantly, the Conference helped establish a shared foundation for future collaboration, generated practical recommendations for Program implementation, strengthened regional networks, and reinforced the importance of inclusive, science-based, and partnership-driven approaches to conserving the region's remaining primary forests.

The outcomes of the Conference will directly inform implementation of the Program's Year 2 Workplan and Budget (July 2026–June 2027) and contribute to achieving the Program's long-term vision of conserving globally significant primary forests across Southeast Asia and the Pacific for biodiversity, climate, and people.

1. Conference Overview

1.1 Background

Primary forests across Southeast Asia and the Pacific (SEAP) are among the most biologically diverse and carbon-rich ecosystems in the world. They provide critical habitat for globally significant biodiversity, support the livelihoods and cultural identities of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, regulate water systems, and contribute substantially to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Despite their importance, primary forests across the region continue to face growing pressures from land-use change, infrastructure expansion, extractive industries, unsustainable commodity production, and climate-related impacts.

The GEF-8 Southeast Asia and the Pacific Forests Integrated Program is one of five regional Integrated Programs supported under the Global Environment Facility's (GEF-8) Critical Forest Biomes (CFB) Initiative. The Program was initially developed under the title Indo-Malaya CFB IP, reflecting its origins within the GEF-8 CFB portfolio. During the Program's inception phase, participating countries and partners agreed to adopt the name Southeast Asia and the Pacific Forests Integrated Program (SEAP Forests IP) to better reflect the geographic scope and regional identity of the Program.

The Program was established to address growing threats to primary forests through a coordinated regional approach that strengthens enabling conditions, supports conservation and sustainable management of primary forests, promotes innovative financing mechanisms, and facilitates collaboration and learning across countries and stakeholders.

The Program comprises three child projects in Lao PDR, Papua New Guinea, and Thailand, supported by the RCP, which is jointly executed and implemented by IUCN and FAO. The RCP provides technical assistance, knowledge management, regional coordination, capacity development, safeguards support, and partnership facilitation across the Program.

The Inaugural SEAP Primary Forest Annual Conference represented the first major regional gathering under the Program since its inception. The Conference was convened from 18–20 May 2026 in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, and served as a strategic platform to review progress achieved during the first year of implementation, facilitate regional exchange and learning, strengthen partnerships, and identify priorities for Year 2 implementation.

The timing of the Conference was particularly significant as countries across the region continue to advance implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF), National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and other national and international commitments related to biodiversity conservation, climate change, and sustainable development.

The Conference therefore provided an opportunity to position primary forest conservation as a critical contribution to achieving these global and regional goals.

In addition, the Conference sought to strengthen collaboration among governments, regional organizations, development partners, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, youth and women's networks, technical experts, academic institutions, financiers, and private sector actors whose collective efforts are essential to securing the future of primary forests across the biome.

1.2 Conference Objectives

The Conference was designed as a multi-stakeholder platform to support implementation of the SEAP Forests IP and advance regional collaboration on primary forest conservation.

Specifically, the Conference aimed to:

- Review and communicate progress achieved during the first year of implementation of the SEAP Forests IP and outline priorities for Year 2 and beyond
- Present key findings from regional assessments, diagnostic studies, and technical analyses undertaken by the Program
- Facilitate knowledge exchange and peer learning among participating countries and stakeholders
- Consult stakeholders on key Program outputs and emerging regional priorities related to primary forest conservation
- Strengthen the visibility and engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IP&LCs), women, youth, and academic institutions in regional forest conservation efforts
- Explore opportunities to strengthen regional cooperation, including collaboration through ASEAN, the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission (APFC), and other regional platforms
- Showcase complementary initiatives, co-financing programs, and partner-led efforts that contribute to primary forest conservation objectives
- Launch the SEAP FIT Coalition as a platform for enhanced collaboration, technical support, and investment mobilization.

The Conference also sought to generate practical recommendations and strategic guidance to inform implementation of the Program's Year 2 Workplan and Budget and support achievement of longer-term Program objectives.

1.3 Participation

The Conference brought together a diverse range of stakeholders representing governments, regional organizations, development partners, civil society organizations, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, youth and women's groups, research institutions, private sector actors, financiers, and technical experts.

Conference Participation at a Glance

The Conference brought together a total of 97 participants onsite and 15 participants online representing governments, regional organizations, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women and youth networks, research institutions, development partners, GEF Agencies, the GEF Secretariat, Technical Advisory Group (TAG) members, private sector representatives, and investors.

Participation reflected the Program's commitment to inclusive and multi-stakeholder engagement, with representation from all ten countries within the Southeast Asia and Pacific primary forest biome.

Category	Participation
Total participants	97
Biome countries represented	Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, PNG, Thailand and Viet Nam
Women participants	43
Youth representatives	2 IFSA and 1 GYBN
IP&LCs representatives	1 AIPP and 1 Women4Biodiversity
TAG	ACB, AIPP, AFoCO, APFNet, CIFOR-ICRAF, GIZ, GYBN, IFSA, ITTO, RECOFTC, UNDP, Women4Biodiversity and WWF 18 participants
Partner organizations	Alliance Bioversity International - CIAT, APFC, ASEAN, GGGI, Lestari Capital, Mekong River Commission, Science Panel for Borneo, UNEP WCMC, UNDP, UTM and WCS

Women represented 44 percent of all participants, contributing actively across plenary sessions, panel discussions, breakout groups, and networking events. The Conference also provided dedicated opportunities for participation by Indigenous Peoples, local communities, youth representatives, and Technical Advisory Group members, ensuring that a broad range of perspectives informed discussions and recommendations.

The diversity of participants was widely recognized as one of the Conference's strengths and contributed significantly to the richness of discussions, exchange of experiences, and identification of collaborative opportunities. Particular efforts were made to ensure meaningful participation by Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and youth representatives, reflecting the Program's commitment to inclusive and equitable approaches to conservation and sustainable development.

1.4 Conference Structure and Methodology

The Conference was designed as an interactive and participatory event that combined plenary presentations, panel discussions, facilitated dialogue, a marketplace, thematic breakout sessions, networking opportunities, and field-based learning.

Over the course of three days, participants engaged in discussions covering a broad range of topics relevant to primary forest conservation, including:

- Regional policy and governance frameworks
- Protected areas and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs)
- Primary forests outside protected areas
- Indigenous Peoples and local community engagement
- Gender equality and social inclusion
- Youth engagement and leadership
- Capacity development and knowledge management
- Commodity supply chains and drivers of forest loss
- Innovative finance and investment opportunities
- Regional collaboration and partnership development.

A dedicated field visit, organized and led by the Department of Forestry (DOF), Lao PDR, in coordination with UNDP Lao PDR, provided participants with an opportunity to observe conservation and sustainable livelihood initiatives in practice and to engage directly with local stakeholders. The visit showcased ongoing efforts to balance biodiversity conservation, community livelihoods, and sustainable forest management, while also highlighting practical challenges and opportunities relevant to Program implementation across the region.

The Conference also featured a Marketplace Session that showcased partner initiatives, co-financing programs, technical resources, and opportunities for collaboration. This interactive format encouraged participants to exchange experiences, identify synergies, and explore potential partnerships.

The Conference was developed and delivered through a collaborative partnership approach involving the Project Management Unit (PMU), participating countries, TAG members, regional organizations, development partners, research institutions, Indigenous Peoples' organizations, local community organizations, youth and women's networks, and private sector stakeholders. Partners contributed to the design and facilitation of plenary sessions, panel discussions, breakout groups, marketplace exchanges, technical presentations, and knowledge-sharing activities. This collaborative approach reflected the multi-stakeholder nature of the SEAP Forests IP and helped ensure that discussions incorporated diverse perspectives, experiences, and expertise from across the region. A detailed Conference Agenda is provided in Annex 1, while participating organizations are listed in Annex 2.

A major highlight of the Conference was the formal launch of SEAP FIT Coalition, which brought together governments, development partners, technical organizations, private sector actors, and investors to strengthen coordination and mobilize support for primary forest conservation across the region.

Throughout the Conference, discussions were documented through session notes, participant feedback, and facilitator observations. The findings and recommendations presented in this report draw upon presentations, plenary discussions, breakout group discussions, panel sessions, and reflections shared by participants during the event.

1.5 Participant Feedback and Conference Evaluation

To support continuous learning and improvement, the Program conducted both pre-conference and post-conference surveys to better understand participant expectations, assess the effectiveness of the Conference, and identify priorities for future engagement.

Pre-Conference Survey

The pre-conference survey highlighted strong interest in technical topics directly aligned with the objectives of the SEAP Forests Integrated Program. Areas of greatest interest included primary forest conservation, protected areas and OECMs, policy and enabling environments, knowledge management and capacity development, innovative finance, and Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' rights.

Participants identified primary forests, regional collaboration, OECMs, sustainable finance, forest monitoring, and technical support as key issues they hoped to discuss during the Conference. Many respondents also highlighted networking, collaboration, technical cooperation, and development of actionable frameworks as important expected outcomes.

The survey results helped inform final preparations for the Conference and confirmed strong demand for practical exchanges, technical learning, regional cooperation, and investment-focused discussions.

Post-Conference Survey

Overall participant feedback was positive and indicated that the Conference successfully met or exceeded expectations.

Among respondents:

- 55 percent reported that the Conference exceeded their expectations
- 36 percent reported that the Conference fully met their expectations
- 9 percent reported that the Conference partially met their expectations.

No respondents indicated that the Conference failed to meet their expectations.

Participants also provided strong ratings for the overall Conference experience. Sixty-four percent rated the Conference as excellent (5 out of 5), while the remaining 36 percent rated it as very good (4 out of 5). No respondents rated the Conference below 4.

Feedback on specific aspects of the Conference are as follows:

- 91 percent rated the Conference discussions as highly inclusive or inclusive
- 91 percent rated the Conference as highly effective or effective in demonstrating linkages between primary forest conservation, biodiversity, climate, and sustainable development agendas
- 100 percent indicated they would be likely or very likely to use the proposed Knowledge Hub for cross-country learning and information sharing
- 73 percent reported that the Marketplace Session helped them identify new collaboration opportunities or synergies
- 100 percent indicated that the Conference had already helped them establish new partnerships or had strong potential to do so.

Participants identified panel discussions, group discussions, the diversity of participants, networking opportunities, and the overall organization of the event as among the successful elements of the Conference. Several respondents specifically highlighted the quality of facilitation, smooth transitions between sessions, responsiveness of the organizing team, and the inclusive nature of discussions.

When asked about priorities for Year 2 implementation, respondents most frequently emphasized conservation finance, blended finance approaches, stronger partnerships, and further development of the SEAP FIT Coalition. These priorities closely aligned with themes emerging from the Conference discussions and subsequent Project Steering Committee (PSC) deliberations.

Overall, the survey results suggest that the Conference successfully achieved its objectives, generated valuable networking and partnership opportunities, and provided a strong foundation for Year 2 implementation of the SEAP Forests Integrated Program.



2. Conference Proceedings

2.1 The Strategic Importance of Primary Forests in Southeast Asia and the Pacific

A central message emerging throughout the Conference was the critical importance of primary forests as foundational assets for biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, sustainable development, and human wellbeing.

Opening presentations and discussions highlighted that primary forests represent some of the most biologically significant ecosystems and least modified forest ecosystems remaining on Earth. They provide habitat for globally threatened species, support ecosystem services essential to local communities and national economies, store significant carbon stocks, and contribute to resilience against climate-related impacts.

Participants emphasized that primary forests should not be viewed solely as biodiversity assets but also as strategic investments in national development, climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, water security, food systems, and cultural heritage.

Several speakers noted that primary forests are increasingly threatened by multiple interacting pressures, including agricultural expansion, infrastructure development, extractive industries, unsustainable commodity production, illegal activities, and climate change. These pressures are often interconnected and require integrated responses that address both direct and underlying drivers of forest loss.

The Conference highlighted that many countries are already making significant efforts to strengthen forest conservation through protected areas, restoration initiatives, and sustainable forest management programs. However, participants acknowledged that additional action is needed to safeguard remaining primary forests, particularly those located outside formal protected area systems.

Discussions also reinforced the importance of aligning primary forest conservation efforts with broader international commitments, including the KM-GBF, NBSAPs, NDCs, and commitments under the CBD, UNFCCC, and UNCCD.

Key Messages

- Primary forests are irreplaceable ecosystems that provide globally significant biodiversity, climate, and livelihood benefits
- Conservation of remaining primary forests is often more cost-effective and impactful than restoration after degradation has occurred

- Stronger integration between biodiversity, climate, and development agendas is required to address the complex drivers of forest loss
- Regional cooperation can play a critical role in supporting national efforts and amplifying conservation impacts.

2.2 Country Perspectives, Implementation Progress, and Regional Support Needs

A key objective of the Conference was to provide opportunities for participating countries to share experiences, challenges, and priorities related to primary forest conservation and implementation of the GEF-8 SEAP Forests Integrated Program.

Representatives from Lao PDR, Papua New Guinea, and Thailand presented updates on progress under their respective child projects and highlighted opportunities for collaboration with the RCP. Representatives from other participating biome countries, including Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Viet Nam, also shared perspectives on national priorities, emerging challenges, and opportunities for collaboration. While these countries are not currently implementing country projects under the Program, discussions highlighted strong interest in accessing regional technical assistance, capacity development, peer learning opportunities, knowledge products, and support related to protected areas, OECMs, transboundary conservation, monitoring systems, safeguards, and sustainable finance.

While national contexts differ considerably, several common themes emerged across countries.

First, participants emphasized the importance of technical support, knowledge exchange, and peer learning. Countries expressed strong interest in learning from one another's experiences in areas such as protected area management, OECMs, transboundary conservation, safeguards implementation, community engagement, monitoring systems, and innovative finance.

Second, countries highlighted the need for practical and demand-driven support that responds to national priorities and implementation realities. Participants welcomed the Program's evolving approach to annual country support planning, through which biome countries will be invited to identify priority technical assistance, capacity development, knowledge-sharing, and regional collaboration needs on an annual basis. Participants emphasized that regional activities should complement and strengthen country-level implementation rather than create additional reporting or coordination burdens.

Third, participants identified capacity development as a continuing priority. Needs were expressed across a broad range of topics, including biodiversity monitoring, GIS and spatial planning, safeguards implementation, gender-responsive programming, stakeholder engagement, and financial sustainability.

Several countries also highlighted the importance of regional platforms that facilitate exchange among practitioners facing similar challenges. Participants noted that opportunities for structured peer learning are often limited despite common conservation priorities across the region.

The Conference confirmed strong support for the Program's role as a facilitator of regional cooperation, technical assistance, and knowledge exchange.

Key Messages

- Countries value demand-driven support tailored to national priorities and implementation needs
- Peer learning and practitioner exchanges are highly valued and should be expanded
- Capacity development remains a significant priority across multiple technical and institutional areas
- Regional coordination can generate substantial added value by facilitating knowledge sharing and collaboration.

2.3 Inclusive Governance and Stakeholder Engagement

A distinctive feature of the Conference was its emphasis on inclusive participation and the recognition that successful primary forest conservation requires meaningful engagement of a broad range of stakeholders.

Dedicated sessions focused on Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth, academia, and other stakeholders whose contributions are often underrepresented in regional conservation dialogues.

Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

Participants repeatedly emphasized that Indigenous Peoples and local communities are among the most important stewards of primary forests across the region.

Discussions highlighted the importance of recognizing customary tenure systems, traditional knowledge, community governance arrangements, and cultural values associated with forests. Speakers stressed that conservation efforts are most effective when communities are genuine partners in planning, decision-making, implementation, and monitoring.

Participants also highlighted the need to strengthen community rights, ensure equitable benefit sharing, and improve access to technical and financial support for community-led conservation initiatives.

Women and Gender Equality

Discussions on gender equality highlighted the critical role that women play in forest management, natural resource governance, and community resilience.

Participants noted that women frequently possess unique knowledge, perspectives, and leadership capacities that contribute to conservation outcomes. However, barriers to participation and decision-making remain common across many contexts.

The Conference emphasized the importance of gender-responsive approaches that go beyond participation targets and seek to address structural inequalities while creating meaningful opportunities for leadership and influence.

Several participants welcomed the Program's efforts to integrate gender considerations through safeguards systems, capacity development activities, and stakeholder engagement processes.

Youth Engagement

Youth participants highlighted the importance of creating opportunities for young people to contribute to conservation efforts, policy development, innovation, and knowledge sharing.

Discussions emphasized that young people represent both current and future leaders of conservation efforts. Participants encouraged the Program to continue investing in youth engagement through mentorship opportunities, capacity development, research partnerships, and participation in decision-making processes.

Youth representatives also highlighted the value of regional networking opportunities and expressed interest in greater involvement in Program implementation and learning activities.

Academia and Knowledge Institutions

Representatives from universities and research organizations highlighted the importance of evidence-based decision-making and stronger connections between research and practice.

Discussions identified opportunities to strengthen collaboration among researchers, governments, communities, and practitioners in areas such as biodiversity monitoring, forest governance, social inclusion, conservation effectiveness, and finance.

Participants encouraged the Program to continue engaging academic institutions as technical partners and knowledge providers.

Key Messages

- Effective primary forest conservation depends on meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth, and other stakeholders
- Rights-based and inclusive approaches are essential for long-term conservation success
- Traditional knowledge and scientific knowledge should be viewed as complementary and mutually reinforcing
- Greater investment is needed in youth leadership, community capacity development, and inclusive governance systems
- Academic institutions can play an important role in strengthening evidence-based conservation and policy development.

2.4 Regional Collaboration and Policy Platforms

A recurring theme throughout the Conference was the importance of strengthening regional cooperation to address shared challenges and opportunities related to primary forest conservation.

Discussions also explored the development of a long-term regional vision for primary forest conservation, including pathways for strengthening cooperation among governments, regional institutions, technical partners, and stakeholders across the biome.

Participants recognized that many of the drivers affecting primary forests transcend national boundaries and therefore require coordinated regional responses. These include biodiversity conservation, wildlife trafficking, illegal logging, commodity supply chains, climate impacts, forest monitoring, and transboundary landscape management.

Representatives from regional institutions, including ASEAN Secretariat and APFC, highlighted the value of existing regional platforms in facilitating dialogue, policy exchange, technical cooperation, and collective action.

Discussions explored how the SEAP Forests Integrated Program could complement and strengthen ongoing regional initiatives while avoiding duplication.

Participants highlighted opportunities for increased collaboration on:

- Transboundary conservation initiatives
- OECM development and reporting
- Biodiversity monitoring and information systems
- Capacity development and peer learning
- Sustainable finance and investment
- Knowledge management and communities of practice
- Engagement in global biodiversity and climate policy processes.

Several speakers emphasized that regional collaboration should be viewed as a mechanism for amplifying national efforts rather than replacing them. The Program was encouraged to continue serving as a platform that connects countries, institutions, and stakeholders while facilitating practical cooperation and knowledge exchange.

Key Messages

- Regional collaboration provides significant opportunities to strengthen conservation outcomes and increase efficiency
- Existing regional institutions and platforms offer important opportunities for partnership and alignment
- Regional cooperation and inter-regional learning can accelerate innovation, strengthen implementation, and facilitate exchange of good practices
- The Program can play a catalytic role in connecting stakeholders and facilitating cooperation

2.5 Capacity Development, Knowledge Management, and Learning

The Conference provided an important opportunity to review preliminary findings from the Program's Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA), Capacity Development Strategy, and diagnostic studies.

Participants broadly agreed that achieving long-term conservation outcomes will require sustained investment in institutional and human capacity across multiple levels, from local communities to national agencies and regional organizations.

The presentations and discussions revealed substantial demand for technical support and learning opportunities in several thematic areas, including:

- Protected area management
- OECMs
- Primary forest monitoring and assessment
- Biodiversity data and reporting systems
- Safeguards implementation
- Gender equality and social inclusion
- IP&LC engagement
- Innovative finance and investment
- Policy development
- Knowledge management and communication.

Participants stressed that capacity development should be demand-driven, practical, and tailored to country needs. Several speakers noted that training alone is often insufficient and should be complemented by mentoring, peer learning, technical exchanges, communities of practice, and ongoing advisory support.

The Conference also discussed the importance of strengthening regional knowledge systems and improving access to technical resources and good practices. Participants expressed strong support for the proposed SEAP Primary Forest Knowledge Hub, which is expected to serve as a central platform for knowledge sharing, collaboration, and learning across the biome.

The Knowledge Hub was viewed as a potential mechanism for connecting governments, practitioners, researchers, communities, and partners while facilitating access to tools, guidance materials, case studies, technical expertise, and lessons learned.

Participants emphasized that knowledge management should be treated as a strategic function rather than simply a communication activity. Effective knowledge systems can accelerate learning, improve decision-making, reduce duplication, and strengthen collaboration across countries and organizations.

The Conference also benefited from participation by representatives from other GEF Critical Forest Biome Integrated Programs, including the Congo Basin and Amazon. These exchanges provided valuable insights into common challenges, lessons learned, and innovative approaches being implemented in other regions.

Key Messages

- Capacity development remains one of the highest priorities identified by countries and stakeholders
- Demand-driven and practical support approaches are preferred over generic training programs
- Peer learning and communities of practice can complement formal training activities
- The proposed SEAP Primary Forest Knowledge Hub received strong support from participants
- Knowledge management should be positioned as a strategic function supporting implementation and learning.

2.6 Protected Areas, OECMs, and Transboundary Conservation

The Conference devoted significant attention to conservation approaches capable of protecting primary forests both within and beyond formal protected area systems.



Discussions highlighted the important role that protected areas continue to play in conserving biodiversity and maintaining ecological integrity. However, participants also acknowledged that many important primary forest areas remain outside protected area boundaries and therefore require complementary conservation approaches.

In this context, considerable interest was expressed in OECMs as a mechanism for recognizing and supporting conservation outcomes in areas governed and managed by a diversity of actors, including Indigenous Peoples, local communities, private landowners, and sectoral agencies.

Participants discussed both opportunities and challenges associated with OECMs. Opportunities included increased recognition of conservation efforts occurring outside protected areas, greater engagement of local stakeholders, and potential contributions to national biodiversity targets and KM-GBF implementation.

At the same time, participants identified several challenges, including:

- Limited awareness and understanding of OECMs
- Uncertainty regarding assessment and reporting processes
- Institutional coordination requirements
- Capacity constraints
- Need for technical guidance and peer learning.

The Conference highlighted strong demand for regional cooperation on OECMs, including exchange of experiences, technical support, and development of practical tools and guidance.

Transboundary conservation emerged as another priority area. Participants noted that many ecologically important landscapes and ecosystems span national boundaries and require coordinated management approaches. Examples from across the region demonstrated the potential benefits of transboundary cooperation for biodiversity conservation, ecosystem connectivity, species management, and shared learning.

Participants encouraged the Program to continue exploring opportunities for regional dialogue, technical exchange, and collaboration on transboundary conservation initiatives.

Key Messages

- Protected areas remain central to primary forest conservation but require complementary approaches beyond protected area boundaries
- OECMs represent a significant opportunity for expanding conservation outcomes and stakeholder engagement
- Countries require additional technical support and peer learning related to OECMs



- Transboundary cooperation offers important opportunities to strengthen conservation effectiveness across shared landscapes
- Regional collaboration can accelerate learning and implementation in both OECMs and transboundary conservation

2.7 Commodity Supply Chains and Drivers of Forest Loss

A dedicated set of discussions focused on the underlying drivers of primary forest loss and the role of commodity supply chains in shaping land-use decisions across the region.

Participants recognized that many pressures affecting primary forests originate outside the forest sector itself and are influenced by broader economic, market, governance, and policy factors.

Discussions highlighted the need to move beyond site-based conservation approaches and engage more directly with the systems that drive forest conversion and degradation. Participants emphasized the importance of understanding supply chains, production systems, market incentives, and investment flows when designing conservation interventions.

Several speakers highlighted emerging opportunities to work with producers, private sector actors, financial institutions, and consumers to promote more sustainable practices and reduce impacts on primary forests.

At the same time, participants noted that sustainable commodity initiatives face challenges related to incentives, governance, traceability, market access, and verification. Effective solutions often require collaboration among governments, producers, civil society organizations, financial institutions, and private sector actors.

The Conference emphasized that addressing forest loss requires integrated approaches that combine conservation, sustainable production, responsible investment, policy reform, and stakeholder engagement.

Participants encouraged the Program to continue exploring opportunities to support sustainable supply chains and strengthen engagement with private sector partners where appropriate.

Key Messages

- Many drivers of primary forest loss originate outside the forest sector
- Sustainable supply chains and responsible production systems are important components of long-term conservation strategies
- Private sector engagement should be viewed as an opportunity as well as a challenge

- Multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential to address complex drivers of forest loss
- Conservation efforts should increasingly consider landscape-scale and systems-based approaches

2.8 Finance and Investment for Primary Forest Conservation

The Conference highlighted the growing recognition that achieving meaningful conservation outcomes at scale will require significantly greater investment in primary forest conservation and sustainable land-use management.

Participants acknowledged that public resources alone are unlikely to be sufficient to address the scale of conservation needs across the region. Discussions therefore focused on identifying opportunities to mobilize additional financial resources, strengthen investment readiness, and connect conservation priorities with financing mechanisms.

A range of financing approaches were discussed, including:

- Public financing
- Blended finance mechanisms
- Biodiversity credits and emerging nature markets
- Sustainable finance initiatives
- Impact investment
- Philanthropic funding
- Corporate and private sector partnerships.

Participants emphasized the importance of ensuring that financing mechanisms deliver measurable conservation outcomes while respecting social safeguards, rights-based approaches, and equitable benefit-sharing principles.

A major milestone of the Conference was the formal launch of the Southeast Asia and the SEAP FIT Coalition.

Launch of the SEAP FIT Coalition

A major milestone of the Conference was the official launch of the SEAP FIT Coalition.

The Coalition was established by IUCN as a multi-stakeholder platform to strengthen collaboration among governments, development partners, public and private finance institutions, investors, technical organizations, civil society organizations, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and the private sector.

Specifically, the SEAP FIT Coalition seeks to mobilize forest finance at scale, support the development of high-integrity investment-ready project pipelines, strengthen enabling policy and institutional frameworks, and facilitate capacity development for governments and stakeholders working on primary forest conservation across Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

The Coalition was launched with the participation of a diverse group of founding partners. Led by IUCN, founding members include Pollination, Hamerkop Climate Impacts, Mana Impact, the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO), the Global Platform for Sustainable Natural Rubber (GPSNR), the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC), and Alliance Bioversity International.

The Coalition will serve as a platform to:

- Share global best practices in project design, development, and financing
- Showcase practical applications of innovative financial instruments, investment platforms, and blended finance approaches
- Mobilize forest financing through public-private-philanthropic partnerships
- Promote common criteria and standards for identifying high-integrity, investment-ready forest projects
- Support investment models that uphold the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and promote gender-responsive benefit-sharing mechanisms
- Contribute to development of a Regional Primary Forest Investment Plan and pipeline of investible projects
- Facilitate implementation of a capacity-building roadmap to strengthen the development of high-integrity, investment-ready forest-positive initiatives.

As an immediate follow-up to the launch, the Program announced a Call for Projects (CfP) to identify high-integrity, investment-ready nature-based solutions (NbS) projects from Critical Forest Biome countries. Shortlisted projects will be further developed and showcased during the 2nd SEAP Forests Investment Conference and associated Technical Working Group meetings. Where appropriate, opportunities will also be explored to strengthen linkages with country-level investments and GEF-supported initiatives.

Participants welcomed the establishment of the Coalition and recognized its potential to strengthen collaboration between conservation practitioners, governments, investors, and technical partners while helping to unlock greater investment in primary forest conservation across the region.

The launch generated considerable interest among participants and was widely viewed as an important step toward strengthening coordination, mobilizing expertise, and improving access to financing opportunities.



Participants highlighted several potential functions for the Coalition, including:

- Facilitating dialogue between conservation practitioners and investors
- Sharing information on financing opportunities
- Supporting development of investment-ready projects
- Promoting technical assistance and capacity development
- Strengthening collaboration among partners working on forest conservation and sustainable finance.

The Conference concluded that innovative financing and stronger partnerships will be critical components of future efforts to conserve primary forests and achieve long-term Program objectives.

Key Messages

- Financing remains one of the most significant challenges facing primary forest conservation
- Greater collaboration is needed between conservation stakeholders and financial actors
- Countries and partners expressed interest in innovative financing mechanisms and investment-ready project development
- The SEAP FIT Coalition represents an important new platform for technical collaboration and investment mobilization
- Social safeguards, equity, and inclusion should remain central considerations in financing approaches



Signatories at the launch of the SEAP FIT Coalition

3. Key Outcomes and Recommendations

The Inaugural SEAP Primary Forest Annual Conference generated a number of important outcomes and recommendations that will help guide implementation of the SEAP Forests Integrated Program during Year 2 and beyond.

The recommendations presented below reflect discussions across plenary sessions, panel discussions, breakout groups, the Marketplace Session, TAG consultations, and stakeholder exchanges held throughout the Conference.

3.1 Regional Cooperation and Policy Engagement

Outcome

Participants expressed strong support for strengthening regional cooperation as a means of addressing shared challenges related to primary forest conservation, biodiversity protection, climate resilience, and sustainable development.

The Conference reaffirmed the value of regional platforms and institutions in facilitating policy dialogue, technical exchange, peer learning, and collaboration among countries and stakeholders.

Discussions also highlighted the importance of linking Program activities with broader regional and global processes, including implementation of the KM-GBF, NBSAPs, NDCs, ASEAN initiatives, and the APFC.

Recommendations

- Continue positioning the SEAP Forests IP as a regional platform for collaboration, learning, and partnership-building
- Strengthen engagement with regional institutions, including ASEAN, APFC, and other relevant networks
- Promote greater exchange and collaboration among the SEAP biome countries and other GEF Critical Forest Biome programs
- Facilitate regional dialogue on emerging policy issues related to primary forest conservation and sustainable management

3.2 Protected Areas, OECMs, and Transboundary Conservation

Outcome

The Conference identified strong interest among participating countries and stakeholders in advancing conservation approaches that complement traditional protected area systems, particularly OECMs.

Participants also highlighted the importance of transboundary cooperation for protecting ecologically connected landscapes and addressing shared conservation challenges.

Recommendations

- Provide technical support and peer learning opportunities related to OECM identification, assessment, governance, and reporting
- Facilitate regional exchange on lessons learned and good practices related to OECMs
- Support dialogue and collaboration among countries interested in transboundary conservation initiatives
- Strengthen knowledge sharing on landscape-scale approaches to conservation and ecological connectivity
- Explore opportunities to integrate OECMs and transboundary conservation considerations into broader biodiversity and development planning processes.

3.3 Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, Women, and Youth

Outcome

The Conference reinforced the central role of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and youth in achieving effective and equitable primary forest conservation outcomes.

Participants emphasized that meaningful participation, inclusive governance, rights-based approaches, and equitable access to opportunities are essential components of successful conservation strategies.

Recommendations

- Continue integrating safeguards, gender equality, and social inclusion considerations across all Program components and activities
- Strengthen support for IP&LC-led conservation initiatives and community-based approaches
- Promote meaningful participation of IP&LCs, women, and youth in planning, implementation, monitoring, and decision-making processes

- Expand opportunities for youth engagement through mentorship, capacity development, networking, and leadership initiatives
- Strengthen collaboration with organizations and networks representing Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, and youth
- Promote the documentation and sharing of traditional knowledge and community experiences, where appropriate and with informed consent.

3.4 Capacity Development and Knowledge Management

Outcome

Participants consistently identified capacity development as one of the most important areas for regional support.

The Conference confirmed substantial demand for technical assistance, peer learning, mentoring, and access to practical tools and guidance across multiple thematic areas.

Participants also expressed strong support for development of a regional knowledge-sharing platform to facilitate learning and collaboration.

Recommendations

- Implement the Capacity Development Strategy using a demand-driven and country-responsive approach
- Prioritize practical learning approaches, including peer exchanges, communities of practice, mentoring, and technical advisory support
- Establish and operationalize the SEAP Primary Forest Knowledge Hub
- Strengthen regional mechanisms for documenting and sharing lessons learned, good practices, and technical resources
- Facilitate regular exchanges among countries, partners, and practitioners working on common challenges and priorities
- Promote stronger collaboration between research institutions, governments, and practitioners.

3.5 Monitoring, Data, and Evidence-based Decision-Making

Outcome

Conference discussions highlighted the importance of reliable information, monitoring systems, and analytical tools for informing policy development, planning, and conservation action.

Participants recognized that countries face varying levels of capacity and access to data, creating opportunities for regional collaboration and mutual support.

Recommendations

- Strengthen support for biodiversity and primary forest monitoring systems
- Facilitate exchange of methodologies, tools, and experiences related to monitoring and assessment
- Promote greater interoperability and consistency of information systems where feasible
- Support countries in utilizing monitoring data to inform planning, reporting, and adaptive management
- Strengthen collaboration among technical institutions, researchers, and practitioners to improve access to evidence and analysis.

3.6 Addressing Drivers of Forest Loss

Outcome

Participants emphasized the need to address underlying drivers of primary forest loss, including unsustainable land-use change, commodity production, infrastructure expansion, and other economic pressures.

Discussions highlighted the importance of integrated approaches that address conservation, livelihoods, governance, markets, and finance simultaneously.

Recommendations

- Promote greater understanding of commodity supply chains and their impacts on primary forests
- Facilitate dialogue among governments, producers, private sector actors, financial institutions, and civil society organizations
- Support approaches that encourage sustainable production and responsible investment
- Strengthen collaboration across sectors to address drivers of forest loss at landscape and jurisdictional scales
- Promote integrated planning approaches that balance conservation and development objectives.

3.7 Finance and Investment

Outcome

The Conference confirmed that financing remains one of the most significant challenges to achieving long-term conservation outcomes.

Participants emphasized the need to mobilize additional financial resources, strengthen investment readiness, and improve collaboration between conservation practitioners and financial actors.

The launch of the SEAP FIT Coalition was recognized as a major milestone and an important opportunity to strengthen collaboration and resource mobilization.

Recommendations

- Operationalize the SEAP FIT Coalition as a platform for technical collaboration, knowledge exchange, and investment facilitation
- Support development of investment-ready conservation and sustainable land-use initiatives
- Facilitate dialogue between governments, investors, development partners, and technical organizations
- Explore innovative financing approaches where appropriate, including blended finance, biodiversity credits, impact investment, and other emerging mechanisms
- Ensure that financing approaches incorporate safeguards, social inclusion, and equitable benefit-sharing considerations
- Strengthen country capacities related to conservation finance and investment readiness.

3.8 Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement

Outcome

The Conference demonstrated the value of bringing together governments, communities, technical experts, development partners, regional organizations, private sector actors, and financiers to collectively address challenges facing primary forests.

Participants highlighted the importance of sustaining engagement beyond the Conference and creating mechanisms that facilitate ongoing collaboration.

Recommendations

- Maintain and strengthen engagement with TAG members and partner organizations
- Continue fostering collaboration among governments, child projects, regional organizations, and development partners
- Promote greater participation by non-biome countries, research institutions, and technical organizations
- Strengthen communication and outreach efforts to increase visibility of Program activities and outcomes
- Utilize regional events, communities of practice, and knowledge platforms to sustain momentum generated by the Conference.

3.9 Strategic Implications for the SEAP Forests Integrated Program

Taken collectively, the Conference outcomes demonstrate strong support for the strategic direction of the SEAP Forests Integrated Program and reaffirm the value of regional cooperation in addressing complex challenges associated with primary forest conservation.

The recommendations generated through the Conference provide a clear framework for guiding Year 2 implementation and reinforce the importance of:

- Demand-driven support to countries
- Regional knowledge exchange and capacity development
- Inclusive and rights-based approaches
- Strengthened regional cooperation
- Innovative finance and investment
- Evidence-based decision-making
- Long-term partnership development.

These priorities were subsequently reflected in discussions during the 3rd Project Steering Committee Meeting and informed implementation of the Program's Year 2 Workplan and Budget.



Participants and presenters during the SEAP Forests IP annual conference

4. Implications for Year 2 Implementation

The Inaugural SEAP Primary Forest Annual Conference was designed not only as a platform for exchange and learning, but also as a mechanism for informing Program implementation and strengthening alignment among countries, partners, and stakeholders.

Discussions throughout the Conference generated important insights regarding country priorities, technical support needs, partnership opportunities, and emerging areas of regional collaboration. These discussions directly informed deliberations during the subsequent 3rd PSC Meeting and contributed to refinement and endorsement of the Year 2 Workplan and Budget (July 2026–June 2027).

The Conference confirmed strong support for the Program’s overall strategic direction while also identifying several priority areas requiring increased attention during Year 2 implementation.

4.1 Strengthening Demand-Driven Country Support

A consistent message emerging throughout the Conference was the importance of ensuring that regional support remains responsive to country needs and implementation realities.

Participating countries emphasized that regional activities should complement and strengthen national implementation efforts by providing technical assistance, facilitating knowledge exchange, and addressing common challenges that are difficult to address through individual projects alone.

The Conference therefore reinforced the Program’s commitment to a demand-driven support model under which countries identify priority areas for regional assistance through structured consultation processes and ongoing engagement with the RCP.

To support this approach, the Program will launch its first annual call for country support proposals in June 2026. The process will provide biome countries with an opportunity to identify priority technical assistance, capacity development, and knowledge-sharing needs for consideration by the Program.

At the same time, child projects and participating countries will continue to receive direct support through ongoing engagement with the PMU and technical partners outside the formal annual support process.

Year 2 Priorities

- Implementation of the annual country support planning process
- Continued engagement with child projects and participating countries
- Tailored technical assistance responding to country priorities
- Strengthened peer learning and practitioner exchanges.

4.2 Advancing OECMs and Transboundary Conservation

The Conference highlighted growing interest among countries in OECMs and transboundary conservation initiatives.

Many participants expressed a desire for additional technical guidance, practical tools, and opportunities to learn from countries that are further advanced in these areas.

The Program is therefore expected to increase its focus on OECMs and transboundary conservation during Year 2, building on existing workplan activities and country requests identified during the Conference.

Particular emphasis will be placed on facilitating technical exchange, documenting good practices, supporting policy dialogue, and promoting collaboration among countries facing similar opportunities and challenges.

Year 2 Priorities

- Regional exchange on OECMs and conservation governance
- Technical support and learning opportunities related to OECM identification and assessment
- Knowledge products and guidance materials
- Exploration of opportunities for transboundary collaboration and landscape approaches.

4.3 Strengthening Capacity Development and Knowledge Management

The findings of the Capacity Needs Assessment and Conference discussions confirmed strong demand for technical capacity development across a wide range of thematic areas.

Participants emphasized that capacity development should be practical, demand-driven, and closely linked to implementation challenges.

The Conference reinforced the importance of moving beyond traditional training approaches and investing in peer learning, mentoring, communities of practice, technical exchanges, and knowledge-sharing networks.

The proposed SEAP Primary Forest Knowledge Hub received broad support and is expected to become a key platform for regional collaboration and learning.

Implementation of the Capacity Development Strategy will therefore represent a major focus of Year 2 activities.

Year 2 Priorities

- Operationalization of the Capacity Development Strategy
- Development of the SEAP Primary Forest Knowledge Hub
- Communities of practice and peer learning initiatives
- Technical exchanges among countries and stakeholders
- Documentation and dissemination of lessons learned and good practices.

4.4 Strengthening Inclusion, Safeguards, and Stakeholder Engagement

The Conference reaffirmed that effective primary forest conservation requires meaningful engagement of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, youth, and other stakeholders.

Participants consistently highlighted the importance of rights-based approaches, equitable participation, social inclusion, and recognition of traditional knowledge systems.

The Program's safeguards, gender, and social inclusion workstreams were widely recognized as important foundations for ensuring that conservation outcomes are achieved in ways that are equitable and sustainable.

Year 2 implementation will therefore continue to strengthen integration of safeguards, gender equality as well as Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and youth participation across Program activities.

Year 2 Priorities

- Implementation of safeguards and social inclusion measures
- Continued engagement with Indigenous Peoples and local community organizations and networks
- Strengthened youth participation and leadership opportunities
- Gender-responsive approaches to Program implementation
- Capacity development on safeguards, gender, and social inclusion.

4.5 Operationalizing the SEAP FIT Coalition

The launch of the Southeast Asia and the Pacific Forest Investment and Technical Partners (SEAP FIT) Coalition was one of the major milestones of the Conference.

Participants welcomed the Coalition as a mechanism for strengthening collaboration among governments, technical organizations, development partners, investors, private sector actors, and other stakeholders.

The Coalition is expected to complement existing Program activities by facilitating access to technical expertise, strengthening partnerships, and supporting investment readiness and resource mobilization.

During Year 2, the Program will focus on establishing practical modalities for Coalition engagement and identifying opportunities for collaboration that generate value for participating countries and partners.

Year 2 Priorities

- Establishment of Coalition engagement modalities
- Identification of technical and investment partners
- Promotion of investment-ready initiatives and opportunities
- Knowledge exchange on innovative finance and conservation finance
- Strengthened collaboration between conservation practitioners and financial actors.

4.6 Strengthening Regional Partnerships and Collaboration

The Conference demonstrated the value of collaboration among governments, regional organizations, GEF Agencies, development partners, technical experts, and other stakeholders.

Participants expressed strong interest in maintaining the networks and relationships established through the Conference and identified opportunities for continued collaboration across a range of thematic areas.

The TAG, regional institutions, development partners, and partner networks are expected to play important roles in supporting Program implementation moving forward.

The Conference also highlighted opportunities to strengthen collaboration with other GEF Integrated Programs and global initiatives working on forest conservation, biodiversity, climate resilience, and sustainable development.

Year 2 Priorities

- Activation of TAG thematic working groups
- Continued collaboration with ASEAN, APFC, and other regional institutions
- Continued to engagement with other GEF Critical Forest Biome programs and opportunities for inter-regional knowledge exchange[AS9.1][JT9.2]
- Expanded technical partnerships and knowledge-sharing initiatives
- Preparation for the next SEAP Primary Forest Annual Conference.

4.7 From Dialogue to Action

The Conference successfully demonstrated the value of bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders to discuss common challenges and opportunities related to primary forest conservation.

More importantly, it helped transform dialogue into actionable priorities for Program implementation.

The discussions and recommendations generated during the Conference directly informed refinement of the Year 2 Workplan and Budget and provided a stronger foundation for collaboration among countries, partners, and stakeholders.

Moving forward, the Program will focus on translating the momentum, partnerships, and recommendations generated in Luang Prabang into practical actions that contribute to the conservation and sustainable management of primary forests across Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

The Year 2 implementation period will provide an important opportunity to demonstrate how regional cooperation, technical support, knowledge exchange, and inclusive partnerships can generate tangible conservation outcomes while strengthening country ownership and long-term sustainability.

5. Next Steps and Conclusion

5.1 Immediate Follow-up Actions

The Inaugural SEAP Primary Forest Annual Conference generated substantial momentum for regional collaboration and Program implementation. To ensure that the outcomes of the Conference are translated into practical actions, several immediate follow-up activities have been identified.

Conference Documentation and Knowledge Sharing

The PMU will finalize and disseminate the Conference Proceedings and Outcomes Report, presentation materials, photographs, recordings, and other relevant resources through the Program's communication channels and knowledge-sharing platforms.

These materials will serve as important references for participating countries, partners, TAG members, and other stakeholders and will contribute to ongoing learning and collaboration across the region.

Annual Call for Country Support Proposals

Building on discussions during the Conference, the Program will launch its first annual call for country support proposals in June 2026.

The process will provide participating biome countries with an opportunity to identify priority technical assistance, capacity development, knowledge-sharing, and regional collaboration needs. Requests will be reviewed by the PMU and relevant technical partners and will help guide delivery of regional support activities during Year 2.

The Program will continue to refine and improve the process based on lessons learned from the first annual cycle.

Operationalizing of the SEAP FIT Coalition

Following its formal launch during the Conference, the PMU will work with interested partners to operationalize the SEAP FIT Coalition.

Initial efforts will focus on:

- Defining collaboration modalities and engagement mechanisms
- Expanding participation among technical and financial partners
- Identifying opportunities for technical assistance and investment support

- Promoting knowledge exchange related to conservation finance and investment readiness
- Exploring opportunities to support investment-ready initiatives within participating countries.

Activation of TAG Working Groups

The TAG will continue to play an important role in supporting Program implementation.

Building on discussions held during the Conference and subsequent TAG consultations, thematic working groups will be activated to support knowledge exchange, technical advice, capacity development, and implementation support across priority thematic areas.

The working groups are expected to contribute to Program activities while also serving as platforms for collaboration among experts, practitioners, and partner organizations.

Knowledge Hub and Capacity Development activities

The PMU will continue advancing implementation of the Capacity Development Strategy and establishment of the SEAP Primary Forest Knowledge Hub.

These initiatives will provide important mechanisms for strengthening regional learning, facilitating technical exchange, and supporting countries in addressing priority implementation challenges.

5.2 Linkages to the 3rd Project Steering Committee Meeting

The Conference was intentionally designed to inform the subsequent 3rd PSC Meeting, held on 20 May 2026 in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR.

The PSC benefited significantly from the discussions, consultations, and exchanges that took place during the three-day Conference. Many of the strategic issues presented to the PSC had already been discussed with countries, Technical Advisory Group members, partners, development organizations, and other stakeholders during Conference sessions.

As a result, the PSC was able to focus on governance, strategic direction, and implementation priorities rather than detailed technical discussions.

The PSC formally endorsed the Year 2 Workplan and Budget (July 2026–June 2027), incorporating refinements and clarifications informed by Conference discussions and stakeholder feedback.

Several themes emerging from the Conference were subsequently reflected in PSC deliberations, including:

- Strengthening support for OECMs and transboundary conservation
- Enhancing regional knowledge exchange and capacity development
- Strengthening safeguards, gender equality as well as Indigenous Peoples and local communities engagement, and youth participation
- Expanding opportunities for innovative finance and investment partnerships;
- Improving coordination among Program partners and stakeholders; and
- Strengthening linkages between regional support activities and country-level implementation.

The close sequencing of the Conference and PSC meeting demonstrated the value of combining broad stakeholder engagement with formal Program governance processes.

5.3 Looking Ahead

The Conference represented an important milestone in the evolution of the SEAP Forests Integrated Program.

Beyond the technical discussions and knowledge exchange, the event helped establish a stronger sense of shared purpose among countries, partners, communities, technical experts, and other stakeholders working to conserve primary forests across Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

Participants consistently emphasized the importance of moving from dialogue to implementation and ensuring that the momentum generated during the Conference translates into practical actions and measurable results.

The Program now enters Year 2 with:

- An endorsed workplan and budget
- Strong support from participating countries and partners
- An operational Technical Advisory Group
- The newly launched SEAP FIT Coalition
- A clearer understanding of country priorities and support needs
- A growing regional network of stakeholders committed to primary forest conservation.

These foundations provide a strong basis for scaling up collaboration, strengthening implementation, and advancing conservation outcomes across the biome.

5.4 Conclusion

The Inaugural SEAP Primary Forest Annual Conference achieved its objectives and established a strong foundation for future regional collaboration under the SEAP Forests Integrated Program.

The Conference provided an inclusive and dynamic platform for governments, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, youth, technical experts, regional organizations, development partners, investors, and other stakeholders to share experiences, identify common challenges, and explore opportunities for collaboration.

Discussions reaffirmed the importance of primary forests as globally significant ecosystems and highlighted the need for integrated approaches that combine conservation, sustainable development, inclusive governance, knowledge generation, and innovative financing.

The launch of the SEAP FIT Coalition, the strengthening of regional partnerships, and the identification of clear implementation priorities for Year 2 represent important achievements that will continue to shape the Program's development.

Most importantly, the Conference demonstrated a strong and growing regional commitment to conserving primary forests and advancing collaborative solutions that benefit biodiversity, climate, and people.

The outcomes and recommendations documented in this report will guide implementation of the SEAP Forests Integrated Program during Year 2 and contribute to the Program's long-term vision of safeguarding the region's remaining primary forests through partnership, innovation, and collective action.



Indigenous Peoples and youth representatives during the Voices from the Biome session

6. Annexes

Annex 1. Conference Concept Note and Agenda

Annex 2. Participating Organizations and Participants

Annex 3. Conference Resources and Reference Materials



