PH Chairs the 31st Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity (AWGNCB)

The conclusion of the 31st Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity (AWGNCB) marked another step forward by the ASEAN member-states (AMS) on biodiversity conservation. The meeting, held on July 8-9, 2021 and chaired by the Biodiversity Management Bureau's Undersecretary and OIC Director Edilberto Leonardo, oversaw a productive effort by the AMS in tackling concerns such as the implementation of the AWGNCB Action Plan, Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, mainstreaming of biodiversity and the Joint ASEAN Statement to the 15th Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of Parties, among others.

Undersecretary for Special Concerns and BMB OIC Director Edilberto Leonardo and members of the Philippine Delegation at the meeting.

The representatives from ten members of the ASEAN (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) attended and participated throughout the entire meeting, highlighting a level of cooperation and synergy undampened by the restriction posed by COVID-19. The Philippine delegation, represented by officials from the BMB, put forward interventions and statements of support on ASEAN initiatives and activities, such as the following:

1. A push to build on the Bangkok Declaration to Combat Marine Debris to strengthen the response towards the global plastic crisis. On behalf of the Philippine Delegation, BMB Assistant Director Amelita Ortiz emphasized the need to initiate bilateral discussion and spark the relevant ASEAN Working Groups to coalesce and create a legally binding global treaty to address plastic pollution, calling the meeting an opportune moment to solidify the stance on the guiding principles and

elements of such treaty and proactively prepare for eventual negotiations on the subject.

BMB Assistant Director Amelita Ortiz during the meeting proper

2. A statement of affirmation for retaining several passages in the proposed draft of the ASEAN Joint Statement to the Conference of Parties (COP) 15, specifically for the retention of texts promoting the mainstreaming of biodiversity into various development processes in the ASEAN region through the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB).

2020 UN BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE
COP 15 - CP/MOP10 - NP/MOP4
Ecological Civilization-Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth
KUNMING · CHINA

The 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was originally scheduled in 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was rescheduled to October 2021.

3. A statement for support for the proposed ACB 2022 Annual Work Plan and Budget. The Philippine delegation congratulated the ACB on its continued efforts on promoting and mainstreaming biodiversity across sectors in the Region. The

Philippines emphasized the increasing importance for mainstreaming biodiversity despite the absence of specific mention of such in the ACB's mandate, owing mainly to the cross-cutting nature of biodiversity as a concern, and the increasing scrutiny on the interlinkages of such with human health, especially through zoonoses.

4. The Philippine Delegation also expressed its support for the Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP) Project. The delegation noted BCAMP's role as a key enabler in improving management of protected areas in the Philippines, and stated support for BCAMP's expansion to even more protected areas with the nomination of the Pasonanca Natural Park as one of the new Heritage Parks under the AHP program.

A Philippine Fairy Bluebird at Pasonanca Natural Park. Photo from Shamyr Daan of Birds of Pasonanca Facebook page

The meeting also tackled concerns such as updates on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, concerns on knowledge management, and the upcoming 15th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 15) in Kunming, China.

Zoom Participants from various ASEAN Member-States

gather