

Joint Statement on Collaborative Research Actions based on the International Forum on Sustainable Future in Asia

The world is now gearing toward the realization of sustainable societies. Over the past few years, the international community has adopted several historic agreements such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the UN General Assembly and the Paris Agreement at UNFCCC COP21. It is important to drive the major steps taken by national and regional stakeholders including governments, the private sector, citizens, and NGOs in meeting the global commitments, especially those related to climate change, waste management, biodiversity, environmental risks, and the well-being of society in general.

Asian countries are on the turning point to realize economically and environmentally sustainable cities and regions. Rapid economic development, industrialization and urbanization caused intensive emission of pollutants and GHGs in past decades, and the global society is faced with the 'transformation points' toward the de-carbonizing society as well as the resilient regions against the rapidly growing risk of climate change. We should note, therefore, Asia could be particularly vulnerable to climate change.

The South East Asia, at the same time, has richness of natural environment and has high ratio of rain forest in the world, although degradation of the biodiversity caused by deforestation and forest degradation are now serious problems. Tropical forests also play a critical role in mitigating climate change by carbon sequestration and storage in the context of REDD+ and other global initiatives. However, climate change and anthropogenic activities are also impacting terrestrial ecosystems such as transformation from primary forests and peatlands to plantations in Southeast Asia.

This calls on the responsibility of reputed institutions to come together with a common goal and interest in the Asia-Pacific region. Both adaptive and mitigative measures need to be considered with more urgency as a solution under the scientific knowledges for understanding status-quo environmental issues of the Asian regions, as well as designing actions toward smarter growth of society and maximizing the welfare of all stakeholders, for present and future. While promoting designing and taking appropriate actions, we also need to focus on an alternate mechanism on how we could strengthen suitable measures through bringing together and networking of research institutions in Asia and expanding cooperative ties by joint international and cross-sectoral research program. In addition, it is also important for scientists and research institutions in Asia to work closely with their governments, citizen groups and business stakeholders, to promote appropriate actions and to elucidate new ways of building sustainable societies in Asia.

As a step toward building scientific, particularly action-oriented, collaboration to solve the above issues and challenges among the participating agents, NIES, AIT, IR3S-UTokyo, UTM and FRIM have initiated discussions to establish comprehensive research initiatives and networks in order to promote effective action within the Asia-Pacific region. This network will foster the best talents in science, technology, and policy in addressing some of the pressing concerns related to the environment, and pursuing possible research projects in the wide spectrum of the research fields, such as, to synergize actions bridging adaptation and mitigation, to support the development of sustainable cities and region through climate action plans based on science, to promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, to protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species with in-situ and ex-situ conservation, and to enhance global support to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species.

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