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MEDIA RELEASE

TH Plantations contributes RM5 million to forest and peatland conservation programme undertaken by Global Environment Centre

Partnership launched for 7-year forest conservation project at Johor's Gunung Arong Forest Reserve

Mersing, 28 October 2023: Conserving and protecting our forests and peatlands is a shared responsibility - not the solely the responsibility of the government. The plantation industry play an important role in committing to drive medium and long-term environmental conservation and preservation efforts.

One such example is the collaboration between the Johor State Forestry Department (JSFD), TH Plantations Berhad (TH Plantations) and the Global Environment Centre (GEC) to conserve 4,300 ha of coastal forests and peatlands in the northeast portion of Gunung Arong Forest Reserve (GAFR) in Mersing, Johor through a seven-year project ending in 2029. TH Plantations has allocated RM5 million to fund the project implemented by GEC in partnership with the JSFD, local government and the local community.

This project aims to help protect and restore the degraded peat swamp forest and coastal area and address some of the most pressing environmental issues that our generation is facing: forest fire, pollution, species extinction and climate change.

The project was launched by JSFD Director, Dato' Haji Salim Aman, in conjunction with the Arong Man Challenge 2023 (AMC 2023). This followed a year-long field assessment covering vegetation, fauna, fish, water, forest-type, mapping and local community stakeholder engagement that was completed in August this year.

"JSFD is committed to and welcomes such great collaborative efforts between corporates, as TH Plantations, NGOs and state agencies in protecting the state's green lungs, including here at GAFR, which consists of various forest ecosystems such as lowland forests, peat and freshwater swamp forests, mangroves and coastal forests," Dato' Haji Salim Aman said.

He also expressed confidence in the project's success towards GAFR Restoration Project with the close cooperation between JSFD, TH Plantations and GEC which as 25-year proven track record in working with local communities, private sector and the government to protect and restore forests and peatlands.

Dato' Haji Salim Aman called on all relevant parties, including local communities, experts, and like-minded organisations and agencies to participate in the protection of the GAFR ecosystem, which is the habitat of rare species and provides functions such as, carbon storage and climate regulation, as well as supplying water for agricultural activities (including paddy fields) and plantations in areas adjacent to forest areas.

The key objectives of the project include developing a management strategy for the forest using a landscape management approach and participation of relevant stakeholders and enhance the protection of the forest area. At the same time, the project aims to rehabilitate degraded areas through re-wetting, assisted natural regeneration and selected tree planting, and support engagement of local communities and other stakeholders in fire prevention, forest rehabilitation, education and public awareness and sustainable livelihoods.

The project will facilitate the management, protection, and restoration of peat swamps and coastal forests to combat climate change by implementing a resource-efficient and climate-resilient development strategy that is in accordance with and integrated with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs).

Dato' Haji Salim Aman said: "The department is extremely grateful to the funding support provided by TH Plantations and looks forward to facilitate cooperation with GEC and TH Plantations in restoring and protecting the GAFR together with the active participation of locals and other relevant stakeholders in the state."

"GAFR is also an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) of the forest sector Rank One under Mersing District Local Plan 2030 and the implementation of this project will play an important role in maintaining the ecosystem services to the locals in the region as well as to the development of eco-tourism prospects in Mersing". He pointed out that the implementation of the project is in line with Johor State Peat Swamp Forest Management Plan 2021-2030 and the Johor State Forest Management Plan.

TH Plantations CEO, En Mohamed Zainurin Mohamed Zain said: "TH Plantations as a responsible oil palm plantation company and part of the Lembaga Tabung Haji Group, we are honoured to participate in this programme as part of our sustainability agenda and commitment to protecting and conserving the environment. As part of an Islamic organisation that supports the objectives of *Maqasid Shariah*, we are called to ensure the success of this environment conservation projects which is one of the important elements to protect the interests of all creatures. This project allows us to support reviving the degraded part of the permanent reserved forest in hope that the effort will improve and return to its natural ecosystem and biodiversity."

He also said "TH Plantations recognised that our operations are surrounded by local ecosystems and biodiversity and the importance of respecting these habitants, supporting the sustainability of the ecosystems and its impact on climate change mitigation."

He added "Most of the communities surrounding GAFR are the Hajj Fund Depositors and are indirectly TH Plantations stakeholders. The success of TH Plantations as a sustainable plantation company will translate to providing good returns to its largest investor Lembaga Tabung Haji as well as TH depositors. Thus, participating in the conservation programme by engaging with the local communities and landowners will have a direct positive impact to the local communities in ensuring sustainable land management, fire prevention and ultimately climate change."

Meanwhile, GEC Director, Mr Faizal Parish highlighted that "the project is of great importance to showcase multi-stakeholder partnership in protecting critical forest landscapes. In the past, the area was adversely impacted by fires linked to the development and drainage of the surrounding peatlands for

agriculture. Only by working with the local community and landowners can we ensure that conservation and agriculture can co-exist, creating a symbiotic win-win situation.”

He added that “GEC will work directly with the selected local communities (especially, Kg. Tenglu Batu 6, Kg. Air Papan, and Kg. Penyabong) to establish mechanisms and incentives for their involvement in the conservation of the forests and sustainable use of the adjacent areas. These include measures such as restoring the hydrological regime, tree planting, fire prevention and patrolling, and communication, education, and public awareness (CEPA). GEC will also help the state government and JSFD in promoting recreation and tourism activities in the area and train local people as tour guides.”

The initiative supports the Greening Malaysia Programme via the National 100 Million Tree Planting Campaign and contribute to Malaysia's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

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About TH Plantations Berhad (TH Plantations)

TH Plantations Berhad (TH Plantations) is a subsidiary of Lembaga Tabung Haji was established in 1972 and listed on the Main Board of Bursa Malaysia Berhad on 27 April 2006. TH Plantations Group is in the business of development and management of oil palm plantation, processing and sales of palm oil and palm kernel and rubber and teak plantations. TH Plantations Group currently has a total of 97,809 hectares of landbank consist of 38 estates and 6 Palm Oil Mills Malaysia and Indonesia. All its estates and mills are MSPO and MSPO SCCS Certified. For more information on THP, please visit www.thplantations.com

About Global Environment Centre (GEC)

Global Environment Centre (GEC) was established in 1998 to work on environment issues of global importance. The Centre is registered in Malaysia as a non-profit organisation but works regionally and internationally both directly and through many partners. It supports information exchange and capacity building as well as undertakes strategic projects particularly in developing countries. GEC works in partnership with other like-minded agencies worldwide. For more information on GEC, please visit www.gec.org.my

About Johor State Forestry Department (JSFD)

The total permanent reserved forest (PRF) area under management of the Johor State Forestry Department (JSFD) is 334,292.46 ha of the State's total land area of 1,916,600 ha. The Johor State Forestry Department is responsible for the administration and regulation of forest harvesting, forest revenue collection and the

development of state resources as well as plans and coordinates the development of wood-based industries. The State Forestry Department is divided into Forest Operations and Forest Development Divisions and supported by District Forest Offices. <https://forestry.johor.gov.my/en/korporat/latar-belakang-jabatan>