

Zurich Malaysia supports TRCRC in race to save key tree species from extinction

Kuala Lumpur, 7 June 2022 – Zurich Malaysia today announced the collaboration with Tropical Rainforest Conservation and Research Centre (TRCRC) to undertake and accelerate conservation efforts to save dipterocarps, an important family of timber trees, from extinction.

The Dipterocarpaceae family comprises 16 genera and 700 known species, of which 162 are endemic to Borneo and found nowhere else in the world. Dipterocarps rarely and irregularly flower. Flowering occurs once or twice every 10 years, sometimes longer. Adding to the conservation challenge, the dipterocarps have seeds which cannot be stored in seed banks as they are not viable for freezing or drying.

Zurich Malaysia Country Head Junior Cho said, “Dipterocarps are the backbone of the Malaysian tropical rainforest ecosystem, supporting a myriad of life forms. They are also a cornerstone of sustainable harvesting, often used for valuable woods, essential oils, balsam, and resins which support tropical economies. Some dipterocarps are threatened with extinction. If they perish, so too does the biodiversity of all life forms they support. By taking decisive action to conserve this vital biological heritage, we hope to inspire others to further recognise and support climate change mitigation, so that we can help build resilience for the community and create a brighter future together. As a signatory of the UN Business Ambition for 1.5°C pledge, the collaboration with TRCRC also supports our commitment to limiting average global temperature increases to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels as these trees act as a natural carbon sink.”

TRCRC Executive Director Dr Dzaeman Dzulkifli added, “62% of all endemic dipterocarp species in Borneo are under threat. We cannot sit back and watch these keystone species disappear as forested habitats sustain 80% of the world’s terrestrial biodiversity. Restoring tropical rainforests and addressing

biodiversity loss in Malaysia has been TRCRC's focus since our establishment in 2012. We are delighted Zurich Malaysia understands the urgency and importance of this conservation effort and have partnered with us. Beyond just planting trees, together we are building resilient and functioning ecosystems that preserve biodiversity and provide sustainable livelihoods for the local communities involved."

The combined efforts of Zurich Malaysia and TRCRC encompass the establishment of two 1.5-hectare Tropical Rainforest Living Collection (TRL) Plots in Merisuli, on a gazetted forest reserve in Lahad Datu, Sabah. These plots are critical for the gathering of data and cultivating of endangered, rare, and threatened (ERT) trees under a controlled environment to prevent their extinction.

In addition, 15 hectares in Merisuli will be reforested with ERT dipterocarps by 2025, expanding TRCRC's existing 224-hectare site in the Ulu Segama-Malua Sustainable Forest Management Project. Zurich Malaysia's support will provide continuity in the maintenance, replanting, census and monitoring work.

Putting our ambition – to be on the most responsible and impactful businesses in the world – into action, the collaboration will also support the livelihoods of the local and indigenous community members, who have been enlisted and engaged as core stakeholders of the project. It expands local job opportunities available through the development of local conservation champions towards ensuring success of the in-situ conservation efforts.

Zurich Malaysia's collaboration with TRCRC complements Zurich Insurance Group's existing restoration project in the Atlantic Forest of Brazil, where we are working with Instituto Terra to plant and replant one million seedlings over eight years to recreate a self-sustaining subtropical forest on the land. While protection and restoration of natural habitats remains a focus in Zurich's overall climate change mitigation strategy, the organisation is using every lever



available – investments, operations, and products and services – to achieve net-zero emissions in its operations by 2030.

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