

Flash report

Celebration of World Environment Day 2021: Launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration



Date: Friday 4 June 2021 | 13.00-16.00 (Bangkok Time)

Venue: Live Broadcasting from Asian Institute of Technology

Disclaimer

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List of Acronyms:

AIT	Asian Institute of Technology
BCG model	Bio-Circular-Green Economy model
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease
EU	The European Union
FAO-RAP	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations-Reginal Office for Asia and the Pacific
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MoNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
NSM	National Science Museum Thailand
SCP	Sustainable Consumption and Production
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SWITCH-Asia RPAC	SWITCH-Asia Regional Policy Advocacy Component
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WED	World Environment Day

Background:

SWITCH-Asia is the programme funded by the European Union (EU) to promote sustainable consumption and production (SCP) across the Asian Region. The SWITCH-Asia Regional Policy Advocacy Component (RPAC), implemented by United Nations Environment Programme, is designed to strengthen the dialogue at regional, sub-regional and national policies on Sustainable Consumption and Production and thereby contributing to green growth and reduction of poverty in Asian countries.

World Environment Day (WED) takes place every year on 5th June as the United Nations' flagship day for promoting worldwide awareness and action for the environment. This year's observance of World Environment Day is on the theme of 'ecosystem restoration' and focus on resetting our relationship with nature. It also marks the formal launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030.

This year, 2021, RPAC plans to celebrate the WED, with the theme of '**Ecosystem Restoration**' and the key message is '**Reimagine. Recreate. Restore.**'. For too long, we have been exploiting our planet's ecosystems beyond the ecological carrying capacity. This has caused serious imbalances in ecosystem services and the human life support system. This trend needs to be redressed, for the sake of human survivability. Ecosystem restoration, in other words 'turning from exploiting nature to healing it', is absolutely essential. World Environment Day 2021 is the first year of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, a global mission to revive billions of hectares of ecosystems, from forests to farmlands, from the top of mountains to the depth of the sea.

World Environment Day offers a global platform for inspiring positive change. It pushes for individuals to actively improve their consumption behavior; for businesses to develop greener models; for governments to invest in repairing the environment; and for youth to build a greener future, for people to reinvigorate a coalition between humanity and nature.

Logistical information about the event

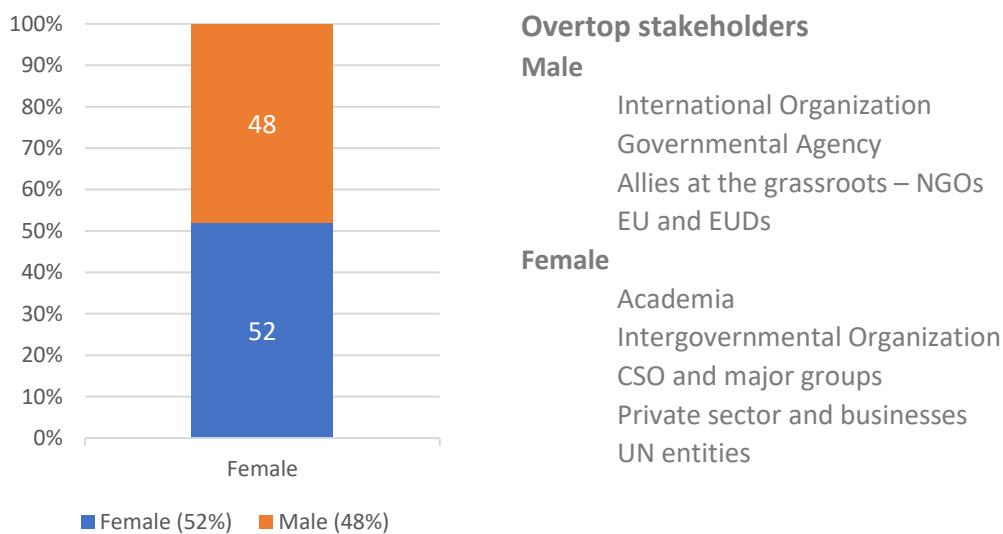
The organization of the online Celebration of World Environment Day 2021 in Thailand on 4th June 2021 was proposed as a part of 2021 WED celebration to recognize the launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. The event was organized as a hybrid-event via live broadcasting from Asian Institute of Technology (AIT).

Review on Participants:

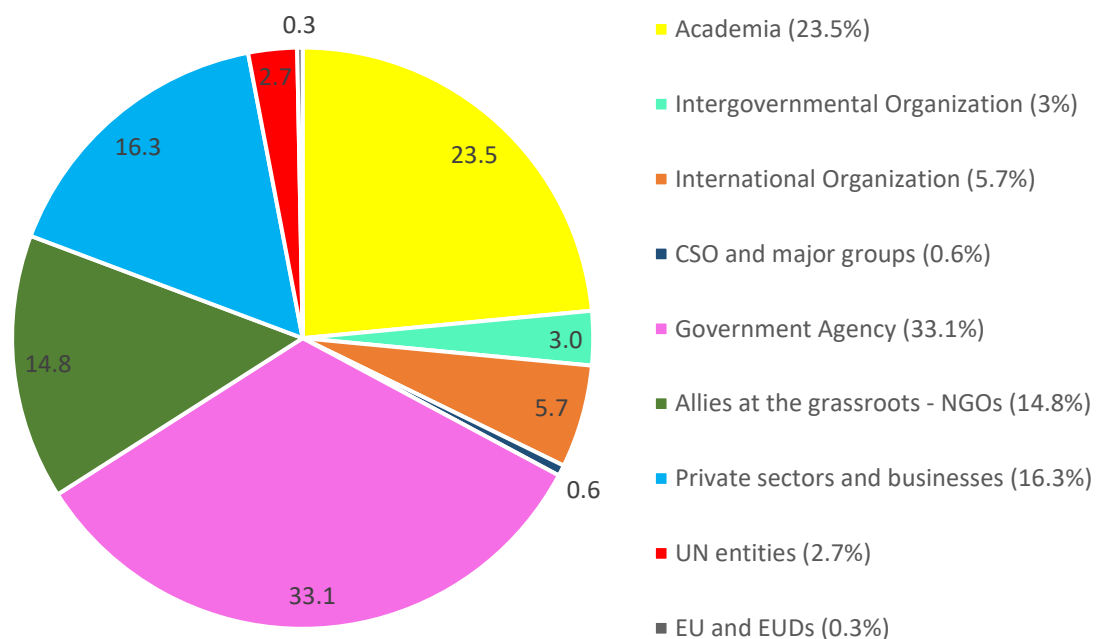
More than 330 participants were registered prior to the event. The event was attended by 124 participants on Zoom platform and more than 1,300 viewers (as of 15th June) joined online which was accessible through Live broadcast on the Facebook’s Page of EU SWITCH-Asia Programme, AIT Entrepreneurship Center and their networks.

Figures below presents the distribution of participants who registered prior to the online launch event by stakeholders and gender. Based on total of 332 registration, 52% were female and 48% were male. Both of them represented mainly by government agency and academia sector.

Registration by Gender (%)



Registration by Stakeholders (%)



Summary of key messages:

The World Environment Day online celebration in Thailand was proposed as a part of 2021 WED celebration to recognize the launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Case studies, current status, challenges, opportunities and practices on ecosystem restoration both in Thailand and around the world were shared by 6 notable speakers from private sectors, academics, international organizations and NGOs.

From the panel sessions, ecosystem that has been damaged normally takes long time for recovering and did not always fully bounced back to provide as much service to us as it used to before. Several organizations are collaborating to restore the ecosystem by using technology and innovation, including strengthen network with local partners to improve efficiency and create dynamic in solving the environment issues. Good practices and cases studies on attempt to stop traditional waste cycle where the waste ended up creating environmental issues were presented by the Ocean Cleanup and TerraCycle. With the organization works, waste collected from ocean and canal would be make sure that its optimal material is recycled in a proper way. The session also indicated challenges for ecosystem education due to COVID-19 pandemic. Educators are encouraged to integrate environmental education by bridging the emotional connect, ecological knowledge and the social cohesion together to implement the education on ground.

Through this webinar, the RPAC successfully highlighted environmental issues arisen from human activities and acknowledged participants on ecosystem restoration as well as inspiring them to take actions toward sustainable consumption and production for people to reinvigorate a coalition between humanity and ecosystem which are connected closely and benefit to both the planet and life.

Remarks

Dr. Eden Y. Woon

President of the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT)

Dr. Woon welcomed every participant to the celebration of WED event. He addressed that AIT has been working with sustainability and environment for a long time. Many programs, researches and projects indicating SCP around Asia and beyond had been pushed forward by the institute. Sustainability, environment and natural resources became teaching and learning cores of various program with intention to create impact and restore environment. Dr. Woon thanked for including AIT as a partner of this WED celebration event and promised that AIT will continue to make improvement in their work in sustainability, environment and social impact innovation. He believed by joining forces and working closely together, we can restore the ecosystem in the decade to come.

Shigeru Aoyagi

Asia-Pacific Regional Director, UNESCO

Mr. Aoyagi presented examples of ecosystem destruction caused by human action and indicated that the ecosystem restoration required a mobilization of science and education in regional level. He addressed that the UNESCO role is based on education of sustainable development and global network to encourage participation of ecosystem restoration along with finding sustainable environmental development solution. He also highlighted that the issue should be recognized as national and global concern. We should conserve the ecosystem that we have and restore what we loss.

Dr. Dechen Tsering

Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, UNEP

Dr. Tsering reminded us on how natural ecosystem is important to all and how it is facing important threats. This is why this year WED celebration is officially marked by the UN as ecosystem restoration decade. Dr. Tsering highlighted some benefits and successes of restoration actions taken in global and country level across the regions. She said that this UN decade provided us structure and network to work together to achieve meaningful outcome and the UNEP will continue to support every country on their efforts.

Takayuki Hagiwara

Regional Programme Leader, FAO-RAP

Mr. Hagiwara highlighted the aim of this UN decade to prevent and reverse the degradation of ecosystem on continent and ocean. He indicated that this is a good opportunity to achieve SDGs as the decade will helps raise awareness and build capacity starting from ground-level effort. The restoration decade is also special to FAO as it helps to meet its strategic objective to have a better world in terms of environment, nutrition, protection and life. Although national strategy and action plan of green and blue restoration efforts are already happening in Asia pacific, Mr. Hagiwara encouraged a stronger and sustainable collaboration to achieve ecosystem restoration and SDGs.

H.E. Pirkka Taipola

Ambassador of the European Union to the Kingdom of Thailand

H.E. Taipola suggested that the post COVID-19 economic recovery should promote sustainable socially and justice and climate. The EU together with its member states reconfirm its commitment through collaboration of EU green deal which became a new road strategy to support a transition to more sustainable economy. Works under this recovering and restoring ecosystem theme will help solve environmental crisis and recover economic of post pandemic world by creating jobs and sustainable growth. H.E. Taipola also presented examples of initiate ecosystem restoration projects implemented by Thai government with the support of EU. He highlighted that EU is happy to continue working together with its member states for the wellbeing of our planet.

Dr. Dindo Campilan

Asia Regional Director and Oceania Hub Director, IUCN

Dr. Campilan presented IUCN roles and frameworks on environment projects around the world. He said the IUCN experts are developing scientific foundation to guide implementation restoration activity. Dr. Campilan highlighted that the IUCN is proud to put the latest science innovation knowledge into practice and helping restore forest, river and wetland and bring ocean back to life. He indicated that partnership is a very important aspect in addressing this environmental and sustainability issue being faced on the world today. He also presented example of projects working with private sectors and governments to tackle environmental issues in both country and regional level.

Dr. Rawin Raviwongse

President of National Science Museum Thailand (NSM)

Dr. Raviwongse raised examples of environmental impact created by human activities. He addressed that this is the time we join hand in restoration our beloved and only ecosystem so the next generation could have a better environment. The NSM has committed to raise the awareness of environmental issues and built a strong positive attitude to society. Strong message of how important the ecosystem is to the living of the mankind was communicated through the museum exhibition, activities and education programs. Dr. Raviwongse also presented some success environmental projects that the museum has been working together with partners such as UNESCO.

H.E. Varawut Silpa-archa

Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand

H.E. Silpa-archa expressed sincere gratitude to all partners for organizing this event. As the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in better environmental impact, he addressed that we should turn this pandemic into inspiration for action to restore our ecosystem. He encouraged everyone to plays their part in the UN decade to move from exploding nature into healing it. Several tools such as BCG model or smart operation systems are using in Thailand to work on long-term strategies for coping with environmental issues. He also highlighted that ecosystem restoration is a global undertaking at a massive scale, but it also includes many small actions everyone can take every day. H.E. Silpa-archa promised that the Thai government will give full cooperation with all stakeholders to bring back our healthy ecosystem.

“Summertime here all year”

Charlie Winston

Singer-Songwriter

The illustrate edited by UNESCO presented photos and information of mangrove ecosystems from many countries. The song focuses on the raising temperature that provided us a feeling of summer season all year. It also talked about other environment issues which are less rain, sinking land, trash in ocean, etc.

Restoring coastal and marine habitats following the largest oil spill in history

Friedhelm Krupp

The Jubail Wildlife Sanctuary

Mr. Krupp introduced the environmental of Persian/Arabian Gulf before telling the story of 1991 gulf war oil spill. The event caused several oil damages in the intertidal zone. The Gulf's delicate ecological balance was disrupted. Mr. Krupp presented efforts of EU-GCC together with government to stop, clean-up and restore the effect of the oil spill. He also addressed subtidal ecosystems and environment issues such as climate change and pollution that also caused accumulated impact to the ecosystem.

Mangrove Restoration: Thailand Case Studies

Siriporn Sriaram

Acting Head of Office, IUCN Thailand Programme

Ms. Sriaram gave a background and economic value of mangrove in Thailand which government tried to recover after it was destroyed by human activities. A case studies of success mangrove restoration around Thailand was presented, highlighting the restoration in Krabi province. Difference restoration techniques were used in each site of the province to provide the best restoration result. Ms. Sriaram also provided project examples that IUCN worked with partners to acknowledge and raise awareness of mangrove ecosystem such as "Thailand Mangrove Alliance" project which launched a pilot application to suggest appropriate restoration technique.

Cleaning up plastic pollution in rivers and oceans worldwide

Ben Hargraves

Business Development, The Ocean Cleanup

Mr. Hargraves presented a video showing one of Ocean Cleanup work, the legacy cleanup. He addressed mission of the organisation to extract plastic pollution from the ocean and intercept it in rivers before it can reach the ocean. The Ocean Cleanup worked by data driven, collaborative and focused on positive action and real impact. Its strategies consist of cleaning up the legacy and close the tap. Plastic waste is collected by floating barrier and brought up on a special-designed ship where it will be distributed and sorted before sending on board to transform into product. Mr. Hargraves also highlighted that the organisation is looking for total solution to maximize impact on river and get as much plastic out before it goes into ocean.

Cleaning up canals in Bangkok

James Scott

Executive Director, TerraCycle Thailand

Mr. Scott introduced TerraCycle and showed some work they have done on recycling plastic waste. TerraCycle does not only clean up waste, but it also studies on waste innovation and provides suggestions to companies on how to make the product more recyclable. Waste collected from canals will go to the company sorting facility before recycling into new products or turning into energy. Mr. Scott presented a showcase in Thailand canals where the company brings local to be part of their project to create dynamic. He also provided case studies of projects TerraCycle worked with other stakeholders in recycling waste.

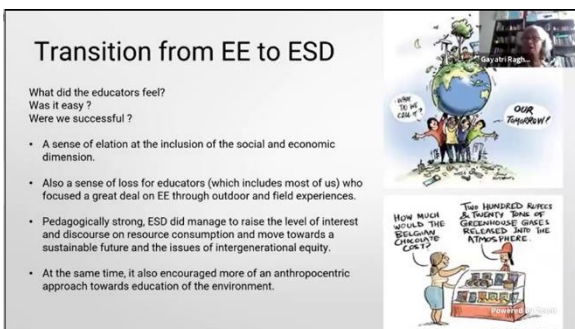
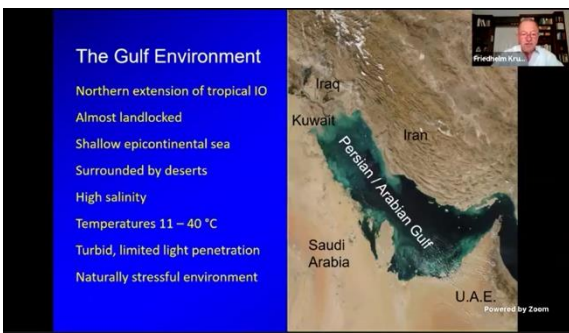
Role of Science Education towards Ecosystem Restoration

Gayatri Raghwa

Executive Director, Wildecologue

Ms. Raghwa presented a history of environment education on how it was held and how it is important. She highlighted that our nowadays education is focusing on what we can gain not what we are losing. Education towards ecosystem restoration would provide a great opportunity to reconnect the young with nature once again. Despite education challenges caused by COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Raghwa raised examples of some initiatives that have continued strong despite the COVID-19 challenge in India.

Snapshots of the event



Annex:

Annex 1: The Final agenda

Time (IST)	Theme
1315-1330	Joining Zoom
1330-1405	Remarks Dr. Eden Y. Woon President of the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) Shigeru Aoyagi Asia-Pacific Regional Director, UNESCO Dr. Dechen Tsering Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, UNEP Takayuki Hagiwara Regional Programme Leader, FAO-RAP H.E. Pirkka Taipiola Ambassador of the European Union to the Kingdom of Thailand Dr. Dindo Campilan Asia Regional Director and Oceania Hub Director, IUCN Dr. Rawin Raviwongse President of National Science Museum Thailand (NSM)
1405-1410	Message H.E. Varawut Silpa-archa Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand
1410-1415	“Summertime here all year” (Illustrated by UNESCO) Charlie Winston’s Singer-Songwriter
1415-1435	Restoring coastal and marine habitats following the largest oil spill in history Friedhelm Krupp Senckenberg Research Institute, Germany
1435-1450	Mangrove Restoration: Thailand Case Studies Siriporn Sriaram Acting Head of Office, IUCN Thailand Programme
1450-1505	Cleaning up plastic pollution in rivers and oceans worldwide Ben Hargraves Business Development, The Ocean Cleanup
1505-1520	Cleaning up canals in Bangkok James Scott Executive Director, TerraCycle Thailand
1520-1535	Role of Science Education towards Ecosystem Restoration Gayatri Raghwa Executive Director, Wildecologue
1535-1550	Summary and announcing 2021 activity calendar Siriporn Sriaram Acting Head of Office, IUCN Thailand Programme
1550-1555	‘Damage Control & Swordfish’ Poem Guy Andrews Musician and Producer
1555-1600	Closing

Moderated by Dr. Benno Boer, Programme Specialist, UNESCO

For more information

SWITCH-Asia event page:

<https://www.switch-asia.eu/event/world-environment-day-2021/>

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