

## Notes from the Chair IUCN SSC Asian Elephant Specialist Group

Vivek Menon

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Dear Members

While I am delighted by the exceptional progress, we are making in fulfilling the commitments of our Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG), I am equally bereft of the demise of our senior member and legendary elephant and large mammal conservationist, prolific writer and a great teacher, Dr A. J. T. Johnsingh. As we commemorate his life and work, let us also recommit ourselves to the causes he championed, ensuring that his contributions continue to shape the future of conservation and our understanding of these majestic creatures.

I am elated to share with you a significant milestone in our conservation efforts – the addition of the Bornean elephants to the Red List of Threatened Species. This fills a crucial gap in red listing of all elephant populations in the wild. This achievement is a testament to the dedication and hard work of the Working Group. The fact that the taxon has been listed as Endangered means that our cheering is limited to the listing but not to the status of the Bornean elephant and I hope this will spur Malaysia and Indonesia to take special measures for the conservation of the species.

The AsESG has finalised the “National Elephant Conservation Action Plan of Peninsular Malaysia” and the plan now has been approved by the Government of Peninsular Malaysia. The “Sumatran National Elephant Conservation Action Plan” has also been approved by the government. The Asian Elephant Transport Working Group, a joint collaboration of the AsESG and the IUCN WCPA Connectivity Conservation SG, has released the “Handbook on Mitigation for Roads and Railways in Asian Elephant Landscapes” that provides recommendations and for elephant-specific crossing structures and mitigation measures to address linear infra-

structure impacts to elephants. The documents can be downloaded at the AsESG’s website.

Our Membership Advisory Committee has reviewed applications and added seven more members to this group, bringing our total to 125 members from 21 countries. I thank the Committee for taking due diligence towards including more members from Southeast Asia.

I am delighted that many members actively participated in the 19th International Elephant Conservation and Research Symposium in Chiang Mai, Thailand and showcased the depth of expertise within our group and contributed to discussions on conservation challenges and solutions. Representing the AsESG at the CoP 28 UN Climate Change Conference in Dubai I delivered a talk that referred to the paper drafted by our Climate Change Working Group. It was also appropriate that we organised a side event on “Room to roam for elephants: Conservation and connectivity in Africa and Asia” at the CoP 14 of Convention on Migratory Species at Samarkand, Uzbekistan. This provided us with a valuable opportunity to highlight the importance of connectivity for elephants and addressed the challenges and opportunities associated with elephant movement and habitat connectivity and urged for dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders to ensure unhindered passage of elephants across landscapes.

It is overwhelming to see the support and contribution of the AsESG members being put to protect and conserve Asian elephants. I would like to thank our partners and donors for financial support to AsESG. I look forward to working closely with each of you and achieving significant milestones in Asian elephant conservation.

Vivek Menon  
Chair IUCN SSC AsESG