

PREFACE

The forests of Southeast Asia are important in many ways to the region and its people. They provide a wide range of social, cultural, economic and ecological services, which sustain human lives and contribute to economic development. They also play host to a large part of the region's terrestrial biological diversity, which is of global importance. All levels of biodiversity play their role, but genetic diversity, the fundamental level, is crucial to the sustainable use and management of Southeast Asia's valuable forests for the benefit of present and future generations.

Much of the forest in Southeast Asia has been lost to different causes over the past decades. This loss threatens forest genetic resources in a number of ways, and intensifies the need to conserve and sustainably manage these resources. The countries of Southeast Asia have already taken their first steps towards tackling this challenge, but constant, coordinated action is still needed at all levels to extend the active conservation and management of forest genetic resources.

Between 25 February and 10 March 2001, the Southeast Asian Moving Workshop on Conservation, Management and Utilization of Forest Genetic Resources brought together delegates from the region and various international organizations to review the current situation and discuss future collaborative action. Thailand's Royal Forest Department (RFD) was pleased to facilitate this workshop and is especially grateful to the Forest Genetic Resources Conservation and Management Project (FORGENMAP) for initiating the meeting and playing a leading role in its organization. RFD also acknowledges the role of the Forest Research Office in hosting FORGENMAP and organizing the workshop.

The workshop reviewed the status of forest genetic resources in Southeast Asia and examined experiences from outside the region. It strengthened commitment, raised awareness and encouraged strategic thinking on how to improve national and cross-border efforts to conserve and manage forest genetic resources. The idea of a *moving* workshop also served its purpose. The many field visits made for a demanding workshop programme, but they encouraged delegates to base their discussions and recommendations on lessons drawn from practical experience.

These proceedings will serve as a record and resource for future action. All of the papers provide valuable information for future collaborative work to enhance the conservation and management of forest genetic resources in Southeast Asia. The key findings of the workshop must be scrutinized and validated, and then fed into the development of a regional action plan. The seeds of regional networking have been sown. Now it is up to the countries that participated to ensure that they grow and spread through communication and joint activities.



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