



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### ***Designation of the Penang Hill Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO: a fitting recognition of the unique natural and cultural heritage of Penang Island and its people***

Penang Hill, Penang, Malaysia (16 September 2021) –

The official designation of the Penang Hill Biosphere Reserve by the International Coordinating Council of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme in Abuja, Nigeria yesterday is certainly a cause for celebration for all of us in Malaysia. With this designation, the Penang Hill Biosphere Reserve, which comprises 12,481 hectares of marine and terrestrial ecosystems in the north-western part of Penang Island will be counted among a distinguished global network of 714 Biosphere Reserves across 129 countries.

Biosphere Reserves the world over are celebrated for their exceptional biodiversity and distinct social landscapes as well as for their potential to demonstrate innovative ways of living in harmony with nature.

This designation is a recognition of the rich natural and cultural heritage of Penang Island and an opportunity to be part of the Man and the Biosphere programme which is a unique platform for international collaboration.

At this time, almost four years ago, together with the state government and Universiti Sains Malaysia, we were preparing for the Penang Hill BioBlitz 2017, a rapid assessment to document the biodiversity of Penang Hill. Our intention was to stimulate interest in nature and emphasise the importance of conserving our living biodiversity heritage. It was also during this time that the idea of establishing a Biosphere Reserve was seeded. We could not be prouder to see this idea blossom into something much larger than our original vision.

Under the leadership of the Penang Hill Corporation, with the contribution of many State and Federal government agencies involved in the preparation and eventual submission of the nomination dossier, the Penang Hill Biosphere Reserve now features not only the timeless forests of Penang Hill but also encompasses the State's Forest Reserves, the historic Penang Botanical Gardens, Penang National Park, and coastal and marine ecosystems in an unbroken link from the hill to the sea.

Together with the communities that live alongside these areas, the Biosphere Reserve truly represents the best of us, and sets forth a challenge to all of us to steward it well.

On behalf of all of us from The Habitat Penang Hill and The Habitat Foundation, my family and I would like to extend our sincere appreciation and congratulations to the Chief Minister of Penang, the Penang Hill Corporation and the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources on this momentous occasion. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with you all on this historic initiative and to have supported it from conception to the happy announcement today.

The UNESCO designation today is confirmation that all our joint efforts have been well-invested and we are optimistic that with the history of close collaboration among all key agencies, it will signal the beginning of an exciting and meaningful journey towards our common vision.

Going forward, The Habitat Group remains committed to showcasing nature on Penang Hill and realising the potential Penang Island has to become an important global centre for tropical research and conservation, environmental education, and best practice in sustainable natural resource management at a time in our planet's history where the healing power of nature, and environmental leadership have never been more important.

**Dato' Harry A. Cockrell, Co-Founder & Chairman of The Habitat Group**

**A. Reza Cockrell, Co-Founder & Executive Director of The Habitat Group**

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## **About The Habitat Group**

The Habitat Group is a sustainable lifestyle and wellness business with nature and nature education at the heart of all that we do. We are guided by the triple bottom line of people, planet and prosperity and are strong believers that business for good is good business. All proceeds generated by the group's commercial activities go directly to support the work of The Habitat Foundation which funds innovative community, environmental and conservation initiatives in Penang, Malaysia and beyond.



## **About The Habitat Penang Hill**

A world-class rainforest discovery centre and eco-park set amid an ancient rainforest atop the storied Penang Hill, the gateway to the Penang Hill Biosphere Reserve. Rediscover and reconnect with nature through age-old tales expressed in new and meaningful ways as you explore and experience the Malaysian rainforest from the forest floor to the tree-tops. Home to the iconic Langur Way Canopy Walk and Curtis Crest Tree Top Walk, The Habitat Penang Hill is gateway to a treasure trove of biodiversity, with over 2,500 unique species calling this ancient rainforest home.

[www.thehabitat.my](http://www.thehabitat.my)



## **About the Habitat Foundation**

The Habitat Foundation is a non-profit organization established to advance the conservation of biodiversity and natural ecosystems in Malaysia and Southeast Asia. We work with diverse partners and stakeholders on conservation, research, education, and sustainability initiatives. Through our grants and Foundation-led programmes, our goal is to nurture the essential transformations in our society to safeguard the living planet upon which all life depends.

[www.habitatfoundation.org.my](http://www.habitatfoundation.org.my)



## **About The UNESCO Biosphere and Man Programme**

The MAB programme is an intergovernmental scientific programme that aims to establish a scientific basis for enhancing the relationship between people and their environments. It combines the natural and social sciences with a view to improving human livelihoods and safeguarding natural and managed ecosystems, thus promoting innovative approaches to economic development that are socially and culturally appropriate and environmentally sustainable.

## **What is a Biosphere Reserve**

Biosphere reserves are 'learning places for sustainable development'. They are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity. They are places that provide local solutions to global challenges. Biosphere reserves include terrestrial, marine and coastal ecosystems. Each site promotes solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use.

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