



## **EUROPEAN UNION**

Delegation of the European Union to  
Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam

Jakarta, 19 June 2016

### **Press Release**

## **'Save our forest giants' – European Union and Nicholas Saputra launch new documentary on elephant protection**

*Last year, the European Union (EU) Delegation to Indonesia adopted two elephants from the Leuser Ecosystem as EU Mascots, symbols of the EU commitment to biodiversity, conservation and the fight against climate change. To bring public attention to the importance of Indonesia's elephants and forests, the EU has now supported a short documentary promoting elephants' protection – Save our forest giants – starring the well-known actor Nicholas Saputra.*

"Today the EU Delegation to Indonesia launches a short documentary film that celebrates Indonesia's forests and elephants and highlights the importance of their protection. Thanks to the excellent cooperation with Nicholas Saptura and his team, we have a touching story that we hope will inspire many people. I believe that if we all work together, we can save our forest giants. Our objective is to raise awareness: if you like this film, you can help even by sharing it with your friends," said EU Ambassador Vincent Guérend during the launch event on Sunday (19/6) in Jakarta.

"Save our forest giants" was premiered during the event which included a talkshow with an audience of over 100 young people and other stakeholders, followed by a breaking of the fast. **Welcomed by H.E. Dr Ir Siti Nurbaya Bakar, Minister of Environment and Forestry**, the panel of the talkshow included the EU Ambassador H.E. Vincent Guérend, Mr Nicholas Saputra and Mr Wahdi Azmi from the Conservation Response Unit Tangkahan.

The short documentary was produced jointly by Nicholas Saputra and Amanda Marahimin and supported by the EU. Mr Saputra is a celebrated actor and Ms Marahimin is known for her work on several popular films including *Gie*, *The Year of Living Vicariously* and *Three Days to Forever*.

Prior to the launch, the EU Delegation organised a social media campaign under the motto #jaGajah, with quizzes and a meme competition, encouraging young people to express their opinions and engage their creativity for elephant protection.

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## **EU Mascots and support to the environment**

The EU over the past 20 years has supported the Government of Indonesia's decision to protect Aceh and North Sumatra's forests through a number of projects amounting to over €50 million. One such effort by the EU was the Leuser Development Programme implemented in 1995-2004 to support the ecosystem long-term conservation, which led to the creation of an independent management body, the Leuser International Foundation. An activity which has successfully survived the test of time and the end of donors' funding is the Aras Napal Elephant Patrol Unit (EPU), training elephants coming from Southern Sumatra to protect the Leuser Ecosystem.

It is from this EPU that the EU Delegation adopted in June 2015 young elephant Aras as an EU mascot to bring public attention to the importance of forest protection and the fight against climate change. Aras' mother – Tanti – was supported by the previous EU projects, highlighting the sustainability of EU support.

Later in October 2015, the EU Delegation adopted baby elephant Eropa from the Conservation Response Unit (CRU) in Tangkahan. The CRU supports conservation and community-based ecotourism in the Leuser Ecosystem. It is also the place, whose elephants and mahouts were feature in the new video.

The EU has provided assistance for nature conservation and biodiversity protection in Indonesia, ASEAN and globally to fight the adverse effects of climate change. While an international and collective process is ongoing to take up the challenges of climate change globally, the EU values local initiatives, especially in Indonesia which is amongst the highest emitters of greenhouse gas in the world. To do so, EU efforts in Indonesia continue with an action on "Support to Indonesia's climate change response," a €15 million programme to help set a low-carbon development path. In addition, the EU has supported the Indonesian forestry sector since 1994 and continues to assist in dealing with illegal deforestation through the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade programme.

### **Threat from Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpes Viruses (EEHV)**

The short documentary film also aims at raising awareness and building impetus for research on a recently recognised herpes virus, EEHV. The virus can cause severe hemorrhagic disease in elephants and is associated with a high fatality rate in young Asian elephants (1-8 years of age). Death frequently occurs within 1-2 days of the first visible signs, and early diagnosis and treatment is critical to survival.

Continued studies and research are the tools to better manage the disease, prevent it and control its spread to ensure the continued survival and conservation of elephants. Further collaboration in refining effective treatments and help in the development of a vaccine to prevent EEHV would be the key for the future.

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"Save our forest giants" is available at:

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For more information

**[http://bit.ly/eu\\_mascots](http://bit.ly/eu_mascots)**