Memorandum of Understanding

Between

the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and

the Government of the Republic of India

on Conservation of the Sundarban

The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Government of the Republic of India hereinafter referred to as "Parties":

Considering that both the Governments are parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity 1992 and are contracting parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands 1971;

Recognizing that the Sundarban of India and Bangladesh represent a single ecosystem divided between the two countries;

Acknowledging that the wildlife sanctuaries of the Sundarban located in both countries is recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Site and in Bangladesh as Ramsar site as well;

Have Reached the Following Understanding:

ARTICLE I

Both Parties recognize the need to monitor and conserve the Sundarban, which is home to rich biodiversity consisting of large variety of rare species of flora and fauna, and acts as a vital protective barrier protecting the mainland from flooding, tidal waves and cyclones.

Article II

Both Parties, with a view to exploiting the potential of the Sundarban for development and alleviation of poverty, agree to undertake, but not limited to, the following endeavors:

a. consider and adopt appropriate joint management and joint monitoring of resources;
b. explore the possibility of implementing conservation and protection efforts, encourage mangrove regeneration, habitat restoration and rehabilitation programs, which would eventually increase the potential for carbon sequestration;
c. develop a long term strategy for creating ecotourism opportunities for both countries, which will create synergy and generate greater revenue.

Article III

The Parties are in agreement that the Sundarban ecosystem is greatly influenced by human use and the human beings living around the Sunderban. The Parties will map and delineate these human settlements on respective sides so that a better understanding emerges of the relationship between human settlements and the ecosystems. The Parties will further develop a management plan that utilizes this information to address issues of livelihood, deprivation by flooding and other climate related disasters, man-animal conflict, pollution, resource depletion, etc. The Parties will through the management plan, also identify opportunities for livelihood generation that do not adversely affect the Sundarban ecosystem.

Article IV

Both Parties agree that an exercise needs to be conducted to identify and catalogue the diversity of flora and fauna that are found in the Sundarban along with their spatial distribution across the countries of Parties. Through this exercise, Parties will determine what areas and species are under pressure including those facing threat of endangerment and extinction. The Parties will develop a comprehensive plan to tackle these threats along with a detailed action plan to adapt against perceived threats.

Article V

Both Parties will carry out research to develop a common and shared understanding of the impacts of climate change along with adaptation strategies that can be implemented.

Article VI

The Parties, in order to contribute to strengthening the management of the Sundarban across the two countries, are committed to the advancement of collaboration in the following and other areas:

(a) Share relevant information between the concerned officials, forest and otherwise, of both the countries;

(b) Explore the possibilities of joint research and management projects;

(c) Share technical knowledge with the common goal of conservation and management of biodiversity of Sundarban;

(d) Organize joint tiger estimation at regular intervals;

(e) Execution of patrolling exercises by the Forest and other relevant Officials of both the Parties along the respective borders to prevent poaching or smuggling of derivatives from wild life;

(f) Promote capacity building exercise and exchange visits of Forest Officials of field level in order to better understand and share ideas and problems of management, biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and promotion of sustainable socio-economic development, and ecotourism;

(g) Exchange personnel for training and promotion of education in forestry, including at the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun financed by the Government of India.

A Working Group will be set up to define activities, responsibilities, time, and resources involved, according to the activities established as per this Memorandum.

Article VII

The Parties further agree that:

Should changes of national policies in either country result in difficulties in the further development and implementation of this Memorandum, both countries will do their utmost to ensure a reconciliation vis-à-vis the difficulties raised.

This Memorandum is non exclusive, allowing both Parties to enter into similar agreements with other countries.

This Memorandum does not constitute any legal obligations for either Party in any international forum and it does not conflict with any other treaty to which either country may be a party to.

Article VIII

The Memorandum may be modified by mutual written consent of the Parties.
The period of this Memorandum will be 5 (five) years and shall be extended automatically at the end of each period unless terminated by mutual consent by either Party by serving written notice 90 (ninety) days prior to the date of termination.
Termination of this Memorandum shall have no effect on other similar agreements or projects entered into by the Parties.
Termination shall not affect the programmes under implementation.

This Memorandum will come into effect on signature and will continue in operation, until terminated by either Party as stated in this Memorandum.

Signed in two originals in Dhaka on the Sixth day of September 2011 in English Language.

For and on behalf of
the Government of the
People's Republic of Bangladesh

For and on behalf of
the Government of
the Republic of
India