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## **SARAWAK'S APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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Sarawak is blessed with abundant natural resources and rich biodiversity. Home to lush tropical rainforests and diverse species of fauna and flora, it is not surprising that Sarawak's main economic drivers are its oil and gas, palm oil and timber, in that order. Because of its dependence on these resources, there is a need to sustainably manage and develop them without compromising the quality of the environment: hence, the *Sarawak Land Use Policy*. This paper will articulate the *Land Use Policy* as the guideline for sustainable development in Sarawak. This policy apportions the hectareage of land to be used for forestry (7 MHA or 57%) with Permanent Forest (6 MHA) and Totally Protected Areas (1 MHA); agriculture (4 MHA or 32%); and the rest for settlement and other miscellaneous uses. Permanent forests serve as production forest to ensure a sustainable timber industry that generates employment for communities mainly in the rural areas. Timber harvesting is carried out in accordance with the principles of sustainable forest management. *Totally Protected Areas* meanwhile comprised National Parks, Nature Reserves and Wildlife Sanctuaries for the conservation of flora and fauna and the environment as a whole, taking into consideration current issues of global warming and climate change. In 1997 the Sarawak Government enacted the Sarawak Biodiversity Centre Ordinance with the aim of protecting and developing its rich biological resources for the benefit of mankind and bringing mutual benefit to the indigenous communities through *Access Benefit Sharing*. Sustainable development is a delicate balance between the need for economic growth and social, political and environmental considerations. All approved developments are required by law to carry out an *Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)* for approval by the NREB before development projects may commence. Also, there is a conscious drive to diversify Sarawak's economy base to become less reliant on its natural resources.

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