



Photo by Faizal Abdul Aziz/CIFOR



International Tropical Peatlands Center

Progress and the way forward

This report by the Interim Secretariat of the International Tropical Peatlands Center (ITPC) covers activities from the launch of the Center in Jakarta on 30 October 2018 until the end of December 2019.

The story begins



A historic moment at the Brazzaville Declaration. Photo by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia

Brazzaville Declaration

- Protect peatlands in the tropics, including the Congo Basin
- Build the ITPC
- Improve the capacity of Global Peatlands Initiative (GPI) partners and countries on peatland management.

On 23 March 2018, the governments of the Republic of Indonesia, the Republic of Congo (RoC) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) signed the Brazzaville Declaration at the third GPI meeting. This involved the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other partners.

The Brazzaville Declaration marked the three countries' commitment to conserve peatlands. The declaration promotes better management and conservation of peatlands for climate mitigation and other benefits. Peatlands represent one of the biggest carbon stores on the planet. Tropical peatlands store 30–40% of global soil carbon deposits on only 3% of the world's land surface. They are key components for mitigating climate change, and their preservation is crucial.

The draining, clearing and burning of peatlands not only produces deadly toxic haze, but also endangers a multitude of critical ecological services that generate consequences for human livelihoods and health.

There is an urgent need for coordinated, interdisciplinary, science-based national and international political responses for tropical countries.

There are

146 countries

in the tropics and subtropics

with around

1.7 million km²

of peatlands, yet they remain among the least understood and monitored of the world's ecosystems.

ITPC launch

Declaration of the ITPC

The Government of Indonesia with the DRC, RoC and the Government of Peru announced a collaboration to form the ITPC in Jakarta on 30 October 2018. The launch was the next step after the historic 2018 Brazzaville Declaration to promote better management and conservation of the world's largest tropical peatlands, the *Cuvette centrale* region in the Congo Basin, and to undertake other peatland initiatives.

In the spirit of international, multistakeholder and multi-donor South-South cooperation, the ITPC is built on the principle of true cross-sector collaboration and integration. It builds a resilient and holistic platform for science, policy and practice, aiming to attract the best minds working on research and practice in the field.

At the ITPC launch, the three participating governments signed a joint declaration:

- acknowledging the important role of peatlands at global, regional and national levels in addressing climate change, protecting biodiversity and the environment, and contributing to the social economic welfare of people;
- recognizing the need to increase respective capacity through collaboration to promote best practices for conservation and sustainable management of peatlands;
- committing to common interests in tropical peatlands and ongoing efforts by governments and partners to conserve and manage them in a sustainable manner;
- committing to strengthening networking and collaboration.

The ITPC Secretariat is based in Bogor, Indonesia, hosted by the Government of Indonesia, coordinated by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, and assisted by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

Launch of the Interim Secretariat of the International Tropical Peatlands Center at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia, Jakarta, 30 October 2018. Photo by Ricky Martin/CIFOR



Objectives

The Center's main objective is to ensure that policy makers, practitioners and communities can access sound, credible and legitimate information, analyses and all other tools needed to design and implement conservation and sustainable management of tropical peatlands.

Roles of the ITPC

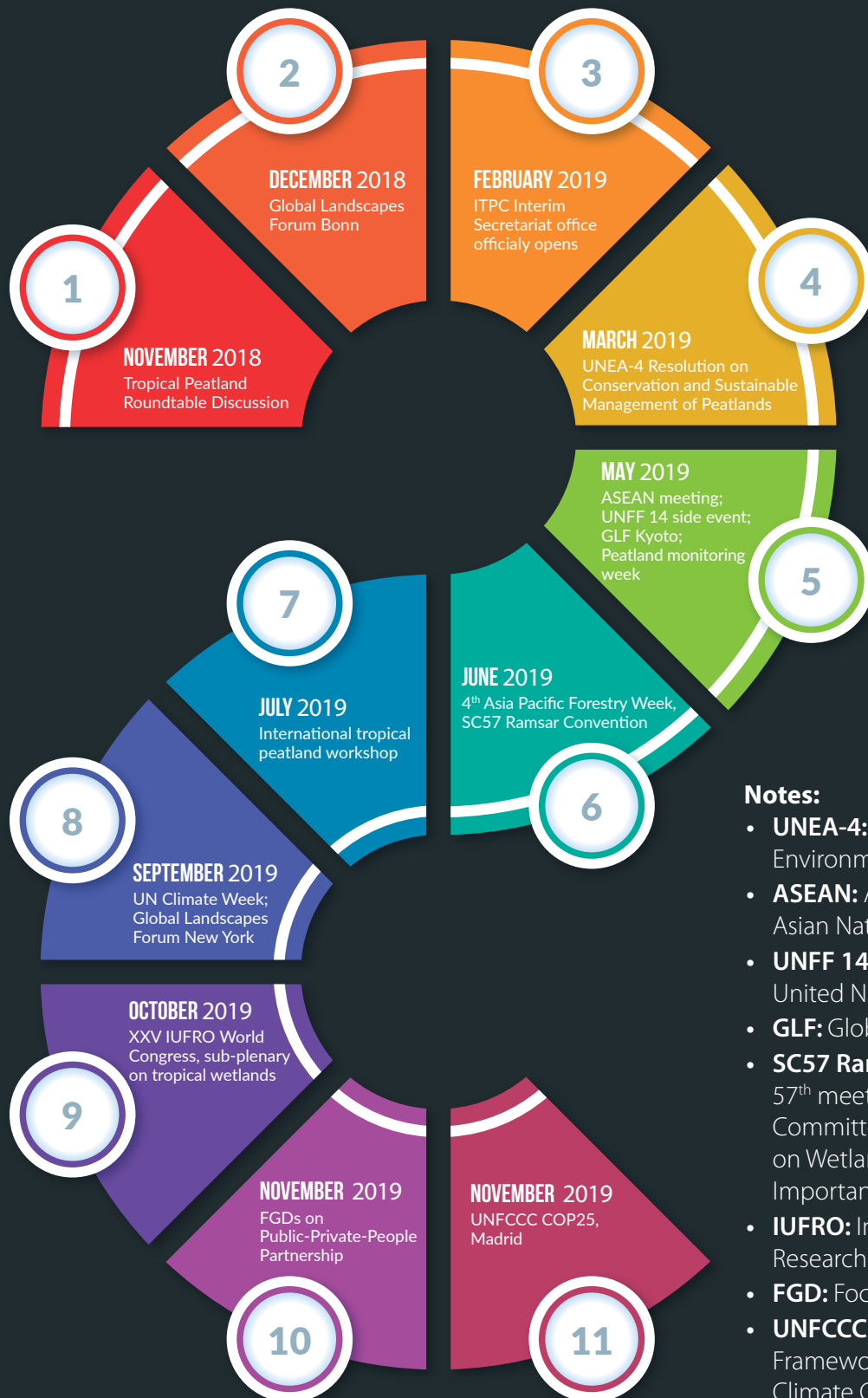
The Center brings cross-cutting collaboration and innovation to study and preserve tropical peatland ecosystems. Recognizing the importance of South-South exchange, the ITPC:

- serves as a go-to space for **South-South cooperation**, which will support dissemination of strategies and practices for tropical peatland management through coordinating and supporting collaborative international relationships and connecting different stakeholders;
- conducts and disseminates **scientific research** on tropical peatland management for sustainable development;
- aims to become a **center of excellence** for tropical peatland research to support policy development;
- provides **capacity building** and **technical services**.

The Minister of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia, Dr. Ir. Siti Nurbaya Bakar M.Sc (left), Minister of Tourism and the Environment of the Republic of Congo, Ms. Arlette Soudan-Nonaults at the launch of the ITPC Interim Secretariat, Jakarta, 30 October 2018. Photo by Ricky Martin/CIFOR



The ITPC at major events



Notes:

- **UNEA-4:** Fourth United Nations Environment Assembly;
- **ASEAN:** Association of Southeast Asian Nations;
- **UNFF 14:** Fourteenth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests;
- **GLF:** Global Landscapes Forum;
- **SC57 Ramsar Convention:** 57th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance;
- **IUFRO:** International Union of Forest Research Organizations;
- **FGD:** Focus group discussion;
- **UNFCCC COP25:** United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 25th Conference of the Parties.

International forums

Since its inception in 2018, the ITPC has hosted and participated in many international events in its effort to promote sustainable management of tropical peatlands. In November 2018, in collaboration with the Forestry and Environment Research, Development and Innovation Agency and the Peatland Restoration Agency, and supported by the International Peatland Society and the Japan Peatland Society, the ITPC convened a **“Tropical peatland roundtable discussion”** in Batam Island, Indonesia. The event sought to promote the ITPC and discuss various issues such as integrating monitoring systems in tropical peatlands, integrating a restoration model based on peat hydrological units and recognizing the need to identify scientific versus information gaps, as well as to promote capacity building.

The ITPC was also present at the **Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) in Bonn**, Germany on 1–2 December 2018. This high-level panel committed to South-South cooperation to protect tropical peatlands — a triple win for the climate, people and the planet. Indonesia — one of the ITPC’s founding countries — highlighted its effort to promote sustainable forestry and its significant contributions to tackling climate change, including through the protection and sustainable management of peatlands.

During the **Fourteenth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF 14)** in New York on 6–10 May 2019, the Government of Indonesia in collaboration with the UNFF Secretariat and UNEP organized a side event on **“Collaborative actions towards sustainable management of peatlands and mangroves”**. The event provided a platform for exchanges of information on experiences and best practices of peatland and mangrove management in different countries, and next steps.

On 13 May 2019, the ITPC hosted a plenary discussion at the **GLF in Kyoto**, entitled **“Climate strategy in peatlands conservation: Competing demands from food, energy and the environment”**. The session explored the possibility of engaging broader partners and countries for more effective South-South cooperation to tackle challenges around peatlands conservation and restoration.

The ITPC also joined a livestream discussion at the webinar workshop, a sideline of the GLF Kyoto 2019: **“Shaping wetlands policy with science for effective actions to address climate change”**. The ITPC was also promoted at the **Kyoto Climate Science Dialogue: Production Landscapes and SDGs** in Kyoto on 14 May 2019. At the event, the panel of speakers discussed capacity development and the role of science for effective implementation of policy for sustainable wetlands management, community and ecosystem resilience in a changing world. They also examined the issue of multi-level governance of wetlands and collaboration within the Global South.

Peatlands research in Congo peat swamp forest. Photo by UNEP





*The ITPC was also present at the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF 14) in New York on 6–10 May 2019.
Photo by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia*

At the **Fourth Asia-Pacific Forestry Week** in Incheon, Korea on 17–21 June 2019, the ITPC hosted a session: **“Encouraging global tropical peatlands knowledge negotiation”**. It discussed the role of forestry and peatlands in mitigating climate change and achieving sustainable development and emission reduction goals. As Indonesia’s partner in the field of forestry, the Korean Forest Service expressed its readiness to develop further collaboration with the ITPC and play a significant role in the restoration of tropical peatlands.

The ITPC was invited as an observer to the **57th Standing Committee meeting of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** in Gland, Switzerland on 25–28 June 2019. One agenda item discussed the outcome of a previous workshop in Vilm, Germany on 21–24 May 2019 (**“Detecting and enhancing the global importance of peatlands in achieving the SDGs”**). The main outcome of the workshop was the need for stronger cooperation and coordination in peatland management, given peatlands are being degraded around the world.

An important narrative is that Indonesia can lead the **“synergy for peatlands”** through the ITPC. This highlights the fact that peatland management is not only the concern of developing tropical nations, but also developed countries that are facing the same problem of peatland degradation.

On the sidelines of the **United Nations Secretary General’s Climate Summit** in New York on 23 September 2019, the Government of Indonesia represented the ITPC at **“Natural thinking: Big ideas talks on peatland”**. At the event, the ITPC presented the commitments of Indonesia, Peru and the Republic of Congo to high-level South-South collaboration on management, restoration and protection of peatlands globally. It also shared details on steps taken by key tropical peatland partner countries to tackle urgent and imminent threats to tropical peatlands. At the **New York Global Landscape Forum** on 28 September 2019, the ITPC, CIFOR and GPI convened a session entitled: **“Peatlands restoration – a vital nature-based solution that can’t be overlooked”**. It shared how tropical forested wetlands, especially peat swamp forests, play a fundamental role in climate change mitigation and adaptation. It also highlighted the ongoing work of partners, including the private sector.

In December 2019, the ITPC participated in the **UNFCCC COP25** in Madrid. Among five events held at the Indonesia Pavilion, ITPC was secured to host at least three sessions: (1) **“Lessons learned on peatland management practices from company concessions, communities and government”**; (2) **“Gearing towards nationally determined contributions (NDC) ambitions with C-rich peatlands in the agenda”**; and (3) **“Getting climate results by bringing peatland science to policy through South-South and triangular cooperation”**.

The first session highlighted different perspectives from stakeholders, including successes and failures, and actions to improve investment on the ground. The session also discussed how a multistakeholder platform can help a country with peatlands like Indonesia to gain more benefits globally from peatland conservation, restoration and management.

The second session highlighted countries and organizations' different experiences and plans. Speakers shared the importance and legitimacy of considering peatlands for both climate change adaptation and mitigation, and of increasing NDC ambitions in peat-rich countries. They also shared some recommendations for strengthening national climate policies. Key messages from the third session: success for emissions reduction on a global scale to achieve the Paris Agreement requires global action on peatlands built on experience and approaches ranging from science and policy to innovative financing. This will require interdisciplinary research and intersectoral collaboration.

On 6 December 2019, the ITPC was promoted at the **Global Peatlands Initiative** side event: **"A coalition for climate action"**. The event highlighted the work and success of a "model coalition for climate action" that has used South-South and triangular collaboration strategically and which has inspired urgent action on peatlands protection, restoration and sustainable management.

On the sidelines of the UNFCCC COP25, the Government of Indonesia also arranged a meeting with ITPC founding countries, the DRC and the RoC on 11 December 2019 as a follow up to the Jakarta Declaration. The partners agreed to schedule further working visits and capacity building/knowledge exchange in Indonesia.

Global initiatives

In March 2019, during the **Fourth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-4)** in Nairobi, Kenya, the Government of Indonesia initiated the first-ever global resolution for the **"Conservation and Sustainable Management of Peatlands"** (UNEP/EA.4/RES.16), which was adopted by all countries. The resolution called for the recognition of peatlands and their important role in the global ecosystem. The resolution also encouraged Member States and international organizations, including the ITPC, to cooperate with national, regional, and international peatland management organizations and all actors, including the UN Global Peatland Initiative to foster conservation and sustainable management of peatlands.

Regional and private cooperation

The ITPC was promoted during the regional meeting between the Indonesian Minister of Environment and Forestry, and permanent missions of Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as the ASEAN General Secretary, in Surabaya on 2 May 2019. The meeting covered policies in environment and forestry; the DG of FOERDIA-MOEF presented the ITPC. In Bogor on 29 July 2019, the ITPC organized a focus group discussion (FGD) on **"Collecting and sharing status of peatlands project initiatives"** in Indonesia. A way to further ITPC project data management, the FGD was part of a knowledge management project that gathered, tracked and compiled data on peatlands project initiatives in Indonesia, Republic of Congo, the DRC and possibly Peru and other countries with tropical peatlands. It also sought to develop general results and core data collections in peatland research initiatives and monitoring to promote and endorse the ITPC's scientific profile.

The ITPC was also promoted during the launch of **Paludiculture Forum** (PaludiFor) in Bogor on 30 July 2019. In 2018, Wetlands International Indonesia facilitated the creation of PaludiFor, an independent multistakeholder forum on the implementation of paludiculture in Indonesia. The Forum intends to develop and promote best paludiculture practices. These will aim to protect, restore and use peatlands sustainably, develop information systems and knowledge related to paludiculture, strengthen stakeholder networks in paludiculture development, add value and competitiveness of

paludiculture commodities and develop other peatland ecosystem services. The ITPC welcomed and encouraged PaludiFor to join and contribute to the Center. At the **Tropical Forestry and Environment Research Festival** in Tangerang on 13 August 2019, the ITPC organized a session on **“Promoting paludiculture practices for sustainable management of tropical peatlands”**. This was held in collaboration with the Forest Research and Development Center and Wetlands International Indonesia.

In November 2019, the ITPC organized FGDs and knowledge-sharing sessions with the government, private sector and community on sustainable and responsible peatland management in Jakarta and Palangkaraya. The FGD with the theme **“Public-private-people partnership on conservation, restoration and community livelihood for responsible and sustainable peatlands management”**, discussed sustainable tropical peatland management from a scientific perspective, including best practices from a number of management units and communities.

Scientific cooperation and events

The ITPC was promoted at the bilateral meeting of Kyoto University on 21 March 2019, where the DG of FOERDIA-MOEF officially presented the Center. ITPC researchers participated at the **Peatland Monitoring Expert Week** in Rome on 21–24 May 2019.

In August 2019, an ITPC researcher participated as a reviewer of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) *Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems*. The IPCC report highlighted the vital role of peatlands for carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation.

On 6 August 2019, the ITPC Coordinator was invited to present the Center at **“Knowledge sharing on peatland restoration”** — a workshop discussing peatland management along with related policies, held by the Korean Embassy in Jakarta. The workshop reviewed research findings and lessons from previous projects implemented in Indonesia, especially in Jambi province. At the event, the ITPC talked about enhancing science-based policy for sustainable management of tropical peatlands.

The ITPC participated at the **Symposium on Sustainable Management of Peruvian Peatlands**, organized by the Sustainable Wetlands Adaptation and Mitigation Program, which is managed by CIFOR, the US Forest Service and others, in Lima, Peru on 9 April 2019. The event focused on different aspects of the ecology, monitoring and sustainable management of coastal and Andean Peruvian peatlands. It recognized that a large part of the population depends on the regulation of meltwater provided by these ecosystems. The ITPC also seized the opportunity to network with the Peruvian government and scientists during the **25th International Union of Forest Organizations (IUFRO) World Congress** in Curitiba, on 4 October 2019.

The ITPC hosted an international peatlands workshop in Bogor on 10–11 July 2019 in collaboration with Newcastle University, CIFOR and other partners on **“Enhancing evidence-based policy by developing core common outcomes and collaborations for peatland research and monitoring”**. The workshop brought together 35 international and local tropical peatlands experts to contribute to the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of peatlands to improve interdisciplinary research.

Media coverage

Since its launch in October 2018, the ITPC has been featured in almost 100 media stories, both internationally and nationally in Indonesia. Additionally, almost 70 social media posts have spoken about the ITPC, with almost 3000 impressions. There have been 16,200 website views.

Around the ITPC launch, leading Indonesian media, including Antara Newswire, Jawa Pos National Network, Media Indonesia and Tribunnews, highlighted the government's commitment to protecting the peatland ecosystems and hosting the ITPC in Bogor. The subsequent **Tropical Peatland Roundtable Discussion** in Batam Island, Indonesia, where more than 70 international peatland experts convened, also received media attention.

From the launch of the ITPC website to the end of October 2018, there were close to 3000 pageviews. Total pageviews gained at the end of 2018 were 5887 for four months with the average number

of pageviews per month being 1472. Content with the title "ITPC soft launch" was accessed 1527 times.

The ITPC was promoted to the media during the **Fourth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-4)** in Nairobi, Kenya, on 11–15 March 2019. During the event, Indonesia initiated five resolutions, including sustainable peatland management. By mid-2019, media attention turned more to forest fires; the World Economic Forum highlighted the Government of Indonesia's move to launch the ITPC. The creation of the Center was positioned as part of Indonesia's efforts to share its experiences of peatland degradation and forest fires.

In the **UNFCCC COP25** in Madrid, Spain, Indonesia shared its experiences in peatland management. During the event, media highlighted international support for Indonesia's effort to achieve its NDC.

Social media

During 2019, the ITPC website received 14,354 pageviews with an average of 1196 pageviews per month. July had the highest number of pageviews, totaling 1852. Most of the media focus in July was on Indonesia's effort to fight forest fires.

Total pageviews in 2020 to date are 2007, and the average number of views per month is 1003. Average ITPC website pageviews per month is above 1000 and the total cumulative pageviews obtained is 22,248.

Between September 2018 and February 2020, the website was mostly accessed by users from Indonesia (2156 users), followed by the United States with 981 users and the United Kingdom with 300 users. This

shows that Indonesia, as a founding country of the ITPC, was able to attract the attention of its own citizens to study the topic of peatlands. The ITPC also achieved its target to be recognized as a global institution with the presence of users from two prominent countries, the United States and United Kingdom, with the second and third highest numbers of users after Indonesia.

Reports from September 2018 to February 2020 show the top five most-accessed contents on the ITPC website. The four most-viewed pages were event coverage. The fifth most-viewed article was a Q&A with Greta Dargie, a prominent peatlands researcher, with 270 pageviews.

The way forward

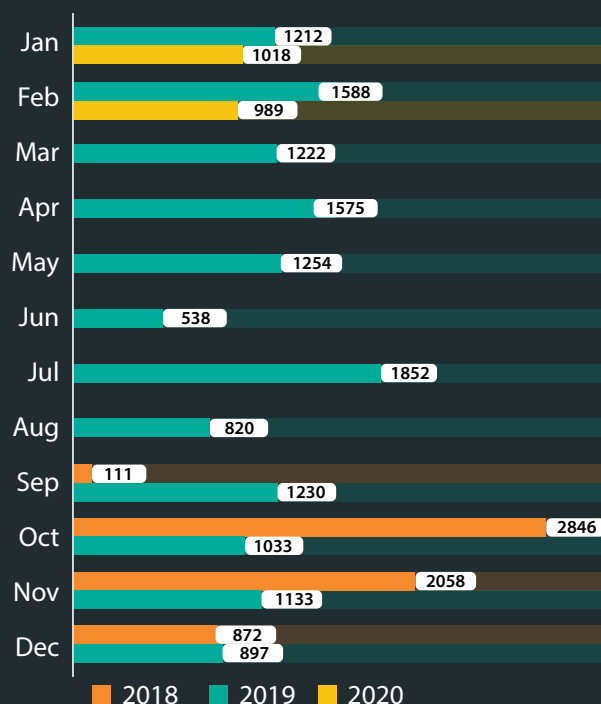
As the Interim Secretariat ends its mandate, several opportunities are available to move the Center forward as a tropical peatland knowledge exchange platform.

There are five proposed action areas:

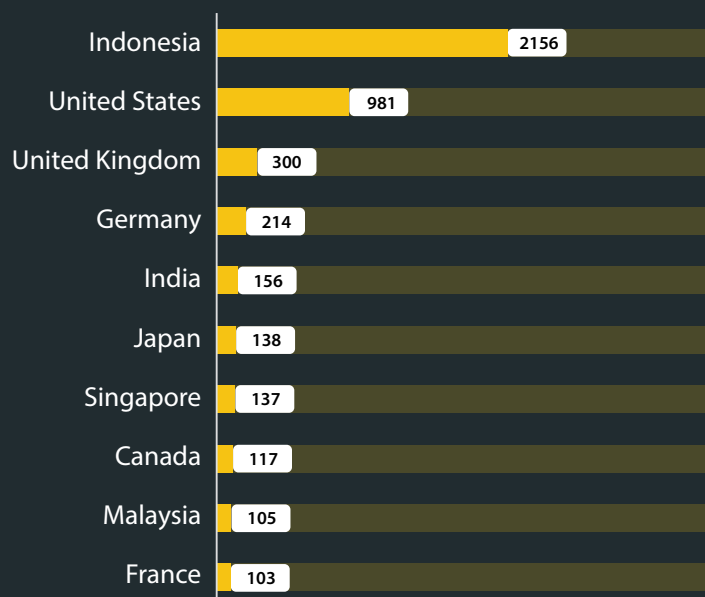
1. The ITPC can serve as a repository of peatland projects in Indonesia. For instance, projects on restoration, paludiculture, best management practices and other relevant research on peatlands can be carried out under the banner of the Center. These activities include
 - collecting and sharing information on peatlands projects in Indonesia to improve collaboration and design of future projects;
 - building a database of existing and seminal tropical peatlands research;
 - documenting/establishing a database of peatland-dependent peoples;
 - creating a directory of tropical peatlands partners and stakeholders.
 Other ITPC countries, e.g. the Republic of Congo, the DRC and Peru, could follow suit.
2. The ITPC can develop core common outcomes and reporting standards for tropical peatlands research and monitoring.
3. The ITPC can coordinate research capacity development. These activities could include
 - creating a compendium of tropical peatlands research issues and questions;
 - training scientists and data compilers to adopt the Wetland Supplement of the IPCC guidelines;
 - coordinating peatland knowledge exchange.

All time pageviews

Monthly pageviews



User by country



Source: ITPC website



Ministry of Environment and Forestry
Republic of Indonesia



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The International Tropical Peatlands Center is a multi-stakeholder cooperation and collaboration. All of its member countries will each provide input in contributing to its development.