

Notes from the Chair IUCN SSC Asian Elephant Specialist Group

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Dear Members

As we continue to witness both progress and challenges in the conservation of the Asian elephant, we are proud to have successfully organised the Fourth Asian Elephant Range States Meeting in Siem Reap, Cambodia in February 2025, marking a major step forward in strengthening regional cooperation. With the launch of the 2025 Siem Reap Declaration (<https://asesg.org/images/2025%20Seam%20Reap%20Declaration.pdf>), we solidified the collective commitment of the 13 elephant range countries to the protection of Asian elephants and their habitats across the continent. The declaration not only builds on the foundation set by the Kathmandu Declaration but also introduces new strategies and initiatives to enhance conservation outcomes.

I am also delighted to share that the IUCN SSC has awarded the AsESG its third Certificate of Appreciation for Excellence in recognition of our ongoing efforts and achievements in the field of Asian elephant conservation. This acknowledgment highlights the dedication, hard work, and collaboration of our entire team, and it reflects the significant impact of our initiatives at a global stage. I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all members of the AsESG for their invaluable contributions. Each of you have played a crucial role in achieving this recognition, and it is your passion, expertise, and commitment that continue to drive the success of our collective mission.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Vietnam for the successful completion of the national Elephant Conservation Action Plan for Vietnam (VECAP), which was endorsed by the AsESG Working Group for assisting the conservation of elephants in Vietnam, led by Dr. Prithiviraj Fernando. Offi-

cially launched by the Government of Vietnam in November 2024, the VECAP, represents a significant milestone in elephant conservation in the region. The government is now organising meetings to support the implementation of this crucial plan, and we are optimistic that it will have a lasting, positive impact on the conservation of Asian elephants in Vietnam.

As part of the Working Group's initiative to map elephant distribution across Asia, the mapping exercise for Thailand was conducted in collaboration with the Department of National Parks, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation (DNP) of the Government of Thailand, AsESG members, and elephant experts from Thailand. This collaborative effort, funded by the Loro Parque Fundación, led to the official launch of the elephant distribution map of Thailand by the Department of National Parks, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, at the 8th IUCN Regional Conservation Forum in Bangkok. This milestone highlights the collective work of the AsESG and the elephant



Figure 1. HE Kim Nong, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Environment, Government of Cambodia, at the Asian Elephant Range States Meeting.



Figure 2. Official group photo of the IUCN Leadership Meeting.

range state to refine population estimates, assess habitat connectivity, and address human-elephant conflict throughout Thailand.

In addition to this, the nine existing Working Groups continue to make remarkable progress in their respective areas. These groups are focused on (i) The Asian elephant as a flagship species needing climate change action, (ii) Human-elephant conflict guidelines, (iii) Mapping elephant distribution, (iv) Translocation of Asian elephants, (v) Green status of Asian elephants, (vi) Social science and policy, and (vii) Invasive species. I am pleased to report that the Working Groups on elephant translocation, led by Dr. Nurzfarina Othman and Dr. Sreedhar Vijayakrishnan, as well as the Working Group on the green status of Asian elephants led by Dr. Shermin de Silva, are gaining significant momentum. I encourage all nine Working Groups to continue their important work and present their findings at the 12th Asian Elephant Specialist Group Meeting. This meeting will provide an important platform to review our progress, share insights, and refine our strategies for the future.

Furthermore, I would like to take a moment to thank the Leadership Team and the Membership Advisory Committee for their invaluable contributions. Their dedication in meeting each quarter and their efforts in expanding our membership have been pivotal. With the addition of new members, we now have a strong and dy-



Figure 3. Receiving the Certificate of Appreciation for Excellence from IUCN SSC.

namic base of 126 committed members. Your collective expertise and active engagement are integral to the success of our group, and I deeply appreciate your continued involvement.

I am deeply moved by the unwavering support and dedication of the AsESG members in their efforts to protect and conserve Asian elephants. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to our partners and donors for their generous financial contributions to the AsESG. As we move forward, I eagerly anticipate collaborating closely with each of you to reach even greater milestones in the conservation of Asian elephants.

Vivek Menon
Chair IUCN SSC AsESG



Figure 4. Presenting the new elephant distribution map to the DG Thailand.