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**Letter to the Editor**

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**Expedite efforts to seek international funds for climate adaptation**

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) echoes the call by Subang MP Wong Chen recently that Malaysia needs to secure international funds for climate adaptation. Adaptation measures are understood as adjustments in ecological, social, or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects or impacts, such as extreme weather events.

SAM has in the past highlighted the need to enhance Malaysia's efforts in seeking international funds to adapt to climate change and increase the protection of our forests and biodiversity, to discourage states from forests conversions for other uses that exacerbate the flood problem.

International funds established under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are available from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Adaptation Fund, Global Environment Facility (GEF), and Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF). These international funds are targeted to support developing countries in efforts to reduce emissions (known as mitigation) and adapt to climate change impacts.

In the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020), there was an allocation of RM7.24 billion for implementation to enhance climate resilience and adaptation measures. However, the recent flood episode has clearly shown that whatever measures are taken thus far are grossly inadequate.

Compared to other ASEAN countries, Malaysia lags behind in securing climate funds for adaptation efforts. For instance, Vietnam has secured USD 36.3 million from the GCF and AF for adaptation projects, while Thailand secured a grant of USD 17.5 million from the GCF to enhance climate resilience. Laos has secured USD 20 million for adaptation projects from the AF and the GCF.

In fact, a 2016 study by the Stockholm Environment Institute reveals that in Malaysia, "the government perceives climate change-related vulnerabilities as generally low compared with other countries in the (ASEAN) region. As a result, the government has subordinated adaptation action to the pursuit of economic development". This mindset has to change.

While Malaysia has currently obtained a grant of USD 3 million from the GCF (for which every developing country is entitled to obtain), to develop a National Adaptation Plan (NAP), we should note that this is only for the preparation of the Plan, and does not include funds for implementation of actions under the Plan. The NAP is expected to take a few years and further resources will be needed in future for the implementation of actions thereunder.

However, while the preparation of the NAP is critical, we cannot afford to do nothing in the meanwhile. The NAP can be expected to be comprehensive, and while awaiting its completion, the federal and state governments should have interim plans and projects that can be submitted to secure international funds for adaptation projects, in addition to relying on domestic resources where this is available. Such projects can

include ecosystem-based measures that will help minimise the risks from the adverse effects of climate change, build climate resilience and enhance disaster risk reduction efforts and preparedness.

For instance, states can emulate what is being done in Penang, where a proposal to the AF for a USD 10 million projects for ‘Nature-based Climate Adaptation Programme for the Urban Areas of Penang Island’ has been approved in September 2020. This project is a collaboration between the state government, UN-Habitat and Think-City, to enhance urban resilience and reduce human and ecosystem health vulnerability to climate change impacts and extreme weather events.

States can submit their own proposals and not wait for federal funds to carry out adaptation projects. Other federal agencies can do the same.

The recent flood events have exposed many flaws in the country’s ability to deal with extreme weather and disasters. We must step up efforts urgently to support the initiatives necessary to be better able to cope with future extreme events and adverse impacts of climate change.

The notion that we are not disaster-prone has to change, given the changing climate.

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