

Moratorium likely only on primary forest

State Minister for the Environment Gusti Muhammad Hatta said the planned two-year moratorium on the clearing of Indonesia's forests would most likely apply to primary forest and peatland only.

"The moratorium will likely be directed to natural primary forest and peatland," Gusti said Monday, adding that it was a win-win solution as three drafts had already been proposed as legal instruments for the moratorium.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was expected to sign the forest moratorium decision, which had been slated to take effect Jan. 1.

Gusti said existing businesses with permits for clearing secondary forests could still operate despite the moratorium.

The climate partnership between Indonesia and Norway stipulates the two-year moratorium be for natural forest and peatland.

Following that agreement, the Forestry Ministry drafted a presidential decree that included a moratorium only on primary forest clearing. The ministry divided natural forest into primary and secondary forest.

Activists called on the government to adhere to the climate agreement with Norway, with a moratorium on the clearing of all natural forests.

The massive expansion of oil palm plantations and mining firms was blamed for the high amounts of forest loss in Indonesia, which is now 1 million hectares a year – JP