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RI urges one voice for ASEAN in Durban

As the 2011 ASEAN chair, Indonesia is urging countries in the region to take a united stance at the upcoming climate change talks in Durban, South Africa. Indonesian wants Southeast Asian countries to jointly call for wealthy nations to slash emissions according to defined targets. Indonesia will also propose that ASEAN create a joint statement to push for the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol on emissions reductions after 2012.

“Our proposal asks that the 10 countries in ASEAN have a legally binding protocol in 2012,” ASEAN senior environment official Liana Bratasida said Wednesday.

“It will be a powerful statement if the 10 countries in ASEAN agree on a united position in Durban.”

Indonesia will host six ASEAN meetings dealing with environmental issues this year.

They are the ASEAN working groups on climate change, environmental education, sustainable cities, multilateral environmental agreements, biodiversity and the ministerial steering committee on haze.

Indonesia holds a chairmanship for the ASEAN working group on sustainable cities and is an alternate for the chairmanship of the climate change talks.

Negotiators from 190 countries, including from ASEAN, will gather in Durban, South Africa, in December to resolve issues and work toward a new legally binding agreement on emissions cuts.

She said ASEAN would also emphasize that the 10 ASEAN countries were vulnerable to the impact of climate change. Liana, who is also a staff member on international cooperation at the Environment Ministry, said Indonesia wanted emissions cuts based on measurements from 1990. “The emissions cut targets of wealthy nations should no longer be as pledged, and the reductions must be based on 1990 levels, not 2005 figures,” she said.

The recent climate talks in Cancun, Mexico, failed to reach an agreement on binding emissions cut targets, with negotiators differing on the years to base cuts on. The United States has pledged to cut 17 percent of its emissions from levels in 2005, which is only 4 percent if considered from 1990 levels.

Experts have warned that wealthy nations should cut between 25 and 40 percent of 1990 levels to prevent a 2 degrees Celsius increase in global temperatures.

Many hope the upcoming Durban climate talks will produce a legally binding agreement after the 2009 Copenhagen failure.

But, Liana said it would be hard to reach an agreement in Durban since last year’s Cancun talks left too many pending issues, including the emissions cut targets and climate financing issues.

“I think the Durban climate conference will only produce a draft of a legally binding treaty to be agreed upon in 2012,” she said.