

## UK, Netherlands criticized over toxic waste shipments to RI

Finance Minister Agus Martowardojo has strongly criticized the British and Dutch governments for allowing hazardous and toxic waste to be shipped to Indonesia.

Speaking to reporters after inspecting 113 containers of hazardous and toxic waste (B3) confiscated by customs officials at the Koja port in North Jakarta on Saturday, Agus said that the British and Dutch governments had violated the Basel Convention by failing to report such shipments to Indonesia.

“If those countries complied with the Basel Convention, they should have reported the shipments to Indonesia because they contained hazardous and toxic waste,” Agus said.

Customs Director General Agung Kuswandono said that 89 containers came from England, while the rest came from the Netherlands. They were allegedly imported by PT HHS.

“All requirements were fulfilled and examiners also said that the containers were allowed to enter Indonesia. However, our officials became suspicious when they opened the containers and found indications of customs law violations,” Agung said.

After further examination, Agus said that customs officials found that the containers mostly held metal scraps containing B3 materials.

Agung said that PT HHS acted as an importer which wanted to recycle the steel.

Environmental Minister Balthasar Kambuata said that metal scraps were not banned from entering Indonesia.

“However, they must be safe and clean. These look like garbage. Some of them are wet, some are dry and some even drips smelly liquids. These clearly violate the law,” Balthasar said.

Balthasar said that the Customs Law, the Environmental Protection and Management Law and the Waste Law were all violated.

Agus said that the government would send a letter requesting all documentation for B3 shipments to the British and Dutch embassies. “We want an explanation for the shipments’ outward manifests,” he said.

Agus said that if the outward manifests stated that the shipments contained B3 materials, the exporters should have alerted the Indonesian government.

Despite condemning the shipments, Agus said that the government was currently unable to send the shipments back because authorities were still investigating.

“These [containers] are evidence and this case is being processed. As of now, this case is still under investigation and it will be before ... the courts until a final decision is made by the judge,” he said.

Agus urged the police to process the case quickly so the shipments could be sent back to their countries of origin as soon as possible.

“We do not want these toxic materials in Indonesia,” he said. (msa)

Central Kalimantan has had consistent economic growth of around 6 percent for the last 6 years. Unfortunately, the growth in Central Kalimantan came from unsustainable practices in agriculture and mining. To become a “green” province, Central Kalimantan needs to curb such quick-yielding but destructive activities, and move toward a low-emission development path at the earliest opportunity.

The challenge for the national government in Jakarta, and also for the international community, is to create an enabling environment in Central Kalimantan through sufficient incentives and a supportive policy environment in implementing sustainable development. Such incentives are needed sooner rather than later, and REDD is currently the only scheme on the table for immediate utilization.

Research in has shown that based on current practices, emissions levels in Central Kalimantan in 2020 are expected to be 50 percent higher than emissions in 2005, making it one of Indonesia’s highest emitting provinces with about 17 percent of the total national emissions in Indonesia. Forest fires, palm oil and peat decomposition are the largest drivers of emissions in the province.

The chair of Indonesian REDD Task Force, Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, at an event on the sidelines of the COP-17 meeting in Durban, acknowledged the complexity of land tenure problems in Central Kalimantan.

The province is suffering not only from the continuing impacts of the failed Mega Rice project under president Soeharto’s administration, which has damaged hundred of thousands of hectares of peat land forests, but also from overlapping concessions between central and provincial level authorities, and between different sectors. The fact that indigenous people’s rights have not been fully recognized makes such overlapping concessions a problem of an even more sensitive nature.

The complicated challenges in implementing sustainable development are not unique to Central Kalimantan. However, with a relatively small area to work with, compared to more than a hundred million hectares of forests through out Indonesia, the government can experiment with selected sectoral reforms and integrated approaches.

Simply said, the REDD+ Task Force and the Central Kalimantan government will embark on a review of existing licenses for mining and plantations within a few selected districts, and explore the legal options for honoring the rights of indigenous people. The Central Kalimantan pilot project will allow the world to share lessons learned.

But, our determination can only yield results if the developed countries are serious in both acknowledging their historical responsibility in accumulating CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere and changing their polluting lifestyles.

Though one can be sympathetic to the domestic challenges in the US, Japan, Russia and Canada to support the second period of commitment under Kyoto Protocol, their absence in committing to the only global regime to reduce carbon emissions is a betrayal to more than 180 countries that have worked hard to keep the earth safe for humanity and all other species.

It is also absurd to demand developing countries such as China, India, Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia, to commit to reducing emissions, while the advanced economies, with almost half of the global GDP, continue to live in amnesia of their past responsibility and dodge their responsibility to reduce future carbon emissions.

Such ignorance will exacerbate the delays in the implementation of REDD+ activities and further discourage communities and companies to cut emissions from Indonesian forests and peat lands.

*The writers are staff members of the presidential office on climate change.*