

## UNDP report shows Indonesia is struggling to combat deforestation

A study by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) shows that Indonesia, the country with the third largest tropical forest coverage in the world, is not doing enough to protect its forests.

The study assessed and indexed the Indonesian government's effort to protect its forests and showed the country had only achieved a score of 2.33 on a scale of one to five.

UNDP Indonesia country director Beate Trankmann said the result indicated there was room for improvement on the part of the government. "Our hope is that the result of the assessment can be used together as a key reference for Indonesian stakeholders to help develop a road map on how to address government issues and challenges requiring attention during the REDD+ [Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation] readiness and implementation phase in Indonesia," Trankmann said during the launching of the report on Monday night in Jakarta.

Trankmann pointed out four main areas that required priority attention: the need to provide certainty to regulate access to forest areas in order to resolve ownership and land rights disputes, to clarify and determine the rights to forest resources, an improvement in law enforcement in the forest sector and decrease the high cost and payment and informal fees for forest permits and licenses for the creation of an efficient, transparent, and accountable procurement mechanism for the acquisition of licenses, which also allowed for public monitoring.

Trankmann said Indonesia was the first of four countries assessed.

Responding to the study, Forestry Minister Zulkifli Hasan said the government needed to make an extra effort to protect the forest. However, he said that the central government practically only held 15 percent of the authority to protect the forests, with the other 85 percent in the hands of local administrations, due to regional autonomy.

"The Forestry Ministry is always under the spotlight for not protecting forests enough, when in fact the biggest authority lies with the local administration," Zulkifli said.

The ministry recently met mounting protests due to its approval of Aceh's provincial government's proposal to convert protected forests into non-forest zones through its spatial planning bylaws.

Data from the Coalition of Aceh Rainforest Movements shows that the new spatial planning legislation would allow the conversion of around 1.2 million hectares of Aceh's existing 3.78 million hectares of protected forest into non-forest areas.

"Only an idiot would approve that conversion. We only approved a conversion of 80,000 hectares of forest into other utilization areas [APL], and that was not including the protected forest areas. The provincial government was initially proposing 150,000 hectares of conversion," Zulkifli told reporters.

The head of the National REDD+ task force, Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, said the index and UNDP's recommendation would be discussed with all forest stakeholders, including the local administration.

The index also reveals that Aceh is the worst performer when it comes to protecting the country's remaining forests, compared to the rest of the country's nine provinces with the largest forest areas.

"We needed to explain the result with regents and governors, as they hold the biggest responsibility should there be any change with the forestry map in the country," Kuntoro said.

Under the REDD+ scheme, Norway allocated US\$1 billion to finance Indonesia's emission reduction programs, which was later followed by Presidential Instruction No. 10/2011, prohibiting the issuance of new licenses for the conversion of primary forests and peatlands in protected and productive forests.