

“Environmental Policies and Programs”

Mr Agus Purnomo

**Special Assistant to the Minister of the Environment
Republic of Indonesia**

Washington, DC, April 24, 2008

Mr. Agus Purnomo described the Ministry’s role as performing a support function to environmental activities, which are performed primarily at the provincial and district level. This support function is executed through several programs: The Environmental Impact Assessment (AMDAL) system and the Special Plan that involved the coordinated efforts of the Ministries of Public Works and the Environment and the National Development Planning Agency (BAPPENAS).

The Special Plan encompasses a rating system that evaluates the operations of commercial entities according to their environmentally-friendly practices. Municipalities are recognized for environmental best practices through various awards. Celebrities are recruited to push conservation and environmental programs. The Plan also attempts to enforce regulations through the employment of inspectors of company operations, and in some instances, violators are brought to court.

The Special Plan is burdened by insufficient resources to execute its programs. The ministry would like to rate 10,000 companies, but is now capable of evaluating only 2,000.

On a philosophical plain, Mr. Purnomo noted that the real challenge was the conversion of Indonesia from a traditional society where personal relationships and customary practices prevail into a modern society where activities and relationships were governed by the rule of law.

Q: Is awareness of the environment being taught in the education system?

A: The problem is that the schools are overburdened with a wide ranging curriculum that includes history, civics and instruction in one of the more than 300 dialects in the country. The Ministry of the Environment provides material for instruction, but it is up to the local school authorities to decide the appropriate emphasis. Considerable reliance is placed on NGO’s to get the message out.

Q: Please outline the government’s efforts to stop illegal logging and control the expansion of palm oil plantations.

A: The prime responsibility for the forests lies with the Ministry of the Forestry. It is only when there are some acts of environmental damage that the Environment Ministry steps in. Most of the illegal logging occurs when legal logging concessions expand the areas of their licensed operations. Loggers with no legal licenses expanded their activities in the late 1990s during the instability from the fall of Suharto. It is estimated that approximately 1,000 bulldozers were in operation in Kalimantan during that period. In the current situation, these bulldozers have reportedly moved on to the Papua provinces and are pursuing their activities there.

A second problem in controlling deforestation is the conflict between the rights of the local and

central governments. It is estimated that there are approximately 20M hectares of deteriorated land that would be suitable for plantation development. However, developers would rather carve out plantations from forests to harvest the timber as a profitable bi-product. Currently it is estimated that there are approximately 110M hectares of forests, of which only 45m have been designated as protected areas. It has to be recognized that the illegal operators have the money to make necessary payments to maintain their trade.

Q: What kind of support does the Global Environment Facility provide Indonesia?

A: The GEF extends assistance in the areas of biodiversity, climate change, and the management of international waters. In the area of biodiversity, the GEF allocates \$42M to Indonesia for the strengthening of the management of protected areas and \$16M for the development of wind energy and biomass programs

Q: Is Indonesia participating in the carbon credit program for avoided deforestation?

A: It is working to be certified by the World Bank as achieving the necessary prerequisites to participate in the World Bank Carbon Fund. This requires the establishment of certain benchmarks that are used to measure the amount of green house gases that are captured by preserved forests. These prerequisites also involve the establishment of certain monitoring

procedures to determine the forest preservation is achieved.

Q: Which ministry is responsible for the national parks?

A: The Ministry of Forests.

Q: Do the peat fires in Kalimantan continue to pose a problem.

A: They remain a problem because of the difficulty in extinguishing them. It can not be done with water. We are hopeful that a weaker El Nino effect will produce more rain in the region and ameliorate the situation.

Q: Are pesticides still being used as part of rice cultivation.

A: An improved version of DDT is being used in farming and in the fight against malaria. The main problem is that large amounts of farm land have been damaged by an over use of chemicals. The government continues to subsidize fertilizer, but not pesticides.

Q: What is the U.S. role in combating illegal logging?

A: The Government of Indonesia is attacking the problem on the supply side by enforcing prohibitions against the practice. The U.S. could be helpful on the demand side by using its influence to inhibit the importation of this material by other countries, mainly in East Asia.