

## INDONESIA, a great country?

Indonesia is a very large country with a total area covering 1,919,440 km<sup>2</sup>. The large area makes Indonesia the fourth largest country in Asia after China, India and Saudi Arabia<sup>1</sup>. In 2003, based on the United Nations' estimate, Indonesia is the fourth most populated country among 193 other countries with a total population of 219.883.000<sup>2</sup>.

Indonesia is also known as one of the most biodiverse countries in the world. Indonesia hosts 11% flower species, 12% mamalia species, 15% amphibian and reptile species, 17% bird species and 37% fish species of the world<sup>3</sup>. Indonesia's mega biodiversity is supported by its archipelagic geographical condition. With more than 18,000 islands, Indonesia is the largest archipelagic country in the world<sup>4</sup>.

Currently Indonesia is the second largest supplier of palm oil after Malaysia. Indonesia plans to overtake Malaysia as the world's largest palm oil producer in 2007 by producing more than 16 million tons of palm oil<sup>5</sup>. Both countries have already cornered 80% of the world's palm oil market.

Indonesia also has vast forest areas covering 120,35 million hectares<sup>6</sup>. This vast forest area has made Indonesia the number one wood supplier in the form of plywood, sawntimber, woodworking, furniture, up to pulp and paper. Asian countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, China, Japan and South Korea, along with European countries and America are the major export destinations of Indonesia's wood products.

Unfortunately these remaining forests are threatened with the highest deforestation rate in the world today. According to data presented by FAO, Indonesia's annual deforestation rate has reached 1.87 million hectares<sup>7</sup>. This figure is lower than the official rate announced by the Ministry of Forestry, i.e. 2.8 million hectares every year<sup>8</sup>. Overall, Indonesia has already lost more than 72% of its intact forests<sup>9</sup> and 40% of its forests completely<sup>10</sup>. Large scale industrial logging and illegal logging operations are mainly to blame for these problems.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Asia-and-Oceania/Indonesia-LOCATION-SIZE-AND-EXTENT.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/Asia-and-Oceania/Indonesia-POPULATION.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/indon-cp.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://geography.about.com/library/faq/blqzislandcountry.htm>

<sup>5</sup> People's Daily Online [http://english.people.com.cn/200606/19/eng20060619\\_275311.html](http://english.people.com.cn/200606/19/eng20060619_275311.html)

<sup>6</sup> BAPLAN. Kebijakan Penyusunan MP-RHL. <http://www.depht.go.id/INFORMASI/INTAG/RHL/RHL-2.PDF>

<sup>7</sup> FAO. 2005. Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005

<sup>8</sup> 10 regents in Kalimantan prosecuted for illegal logging, The Jakarta Post, 5th December 2005

<sup>9</sup> World Resources Institute. 1997. The Last Frontier Forests

<sup>10</sup> FAO. 2005. op. cit.

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According to the deforestation rates from the FAO, Indonesia tops the list of fastest forest destroyers in the world. During 2000-2005, Indonesia destroys about 2% of its forests annually. In terms of total area, Indonesia destroys 1.87 million hectares of forests each year equivalent to 300 football fields every hour.

Several experts have concluded that global climate change is caused by the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is one of the major gases contributing to climate change. Recently several research institutes including Wetlands International found that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions caused by peatland conversion and forest fires in Indonesia generates up to 516 metric tonnes each year. This makes Indonesia the third largest emitter of greenhouse gas emission in the world after the United States and China<sup>11</sup>.

The Environmental Minister, Rachmat Witoelar also stated that Indonesia is bound to lose around 2,000 of its islands with a projected 89 cm sea level rise in 2030 due to global climate change<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Hooijer, A., Silvius, M., Wösten, H. and Page, S. 2006. PEAT- CO<sub>2</sub>, Assessment of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from drained peatlands in SE Asia. Delft Hydraulics report Q3943 (2006)

<sup>12</sup> INTERVIEW - Indonesia Wants Countries Paid to Keep Forests  
<http://www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm/newsid/40091/story.htm>

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