



Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

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*The **Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest** is a biweekly collection of summaries of articles related to conservation, the environment and sustainability in Indonesia which have appeared in print or online in local, regional and global English-language media. We welcome comments, suggestions, and corrections. To learn more about us and to access previous editions of the News Digest, please visit our*

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A. Marine & Fisheries

[Eight investors show interest in eastern Indonesia fisheries sector](#)

—M Razi Rahman, Resinta S, *Antara News*, 30 July 2022

Eight domestic investors have expressed interest in channelling Rp 156 billion (US\$ 10.4 million) to develop the fishing industry in eastern Indonesia, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (KKP) announced. Plans include expanding shrimp cultivation, fish processing, and seaweed marketing. The investments will include Rp 80 billion for shrimp cultivation and Rp 10 billion for tuna and crab processing on Sumbawa in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) province; construction of an ice factory worth Rp 500 million; and a fish processing unit worth Rp 45 billion for fresh fish products and frozen fish at Mimika in Papua Province. In East Flores, East Nusa Tenggara province, investors are interested in placing Rp 20 billion for a fish processing unit and Rp 500 million for an ice factory. Catur Sarwanto, Director of Business Investment at the KKP's Directorate General of Marine and Fishery Products Competitiveness said his office is encouraging investments in Parepare, South Sulawesi, in order to encourage growth in the sector in the city and its surrounding areas.

[Overlooked and at risk, seagrass is habitat of choice for many small-scale fishers](#)

—Basten Gokkon, *Mongabay*, 10 August 2022

Seagrass meadows are the fishing grounds of choice for many fishing households in Indonesia, Cambodia, Tanzania and Sri Lanka, according to a new study. Fishers identified Seagrass meadows as being more easily accessible than coral reefs, often without need for a boat, and less likely to damage equipment such as nets. Household income and adaptive capacity largely governs dependence on seagrass, as poorer households are less likely to be able to afford to own motorboats or who use static fishing fences, while wealthier households are more likely to invest in fishing gears that incentivise them to use seagrass habitats because of high rewards and lower effort requirements. However, seagrass meadows around the world are disappearing at rates that rival those of coral reefs and tropical rainforests, losing as much as 7% of their area each year, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), primarily due to climate change, coastal development, pollution, and the spread of invasive species.

Paper: Benjamin L. H. Jones et al, "[Dependence on seagrass fisheries governed by household income and adaptive capacity](#)", *Ocean & Coastal Management* 225, 15 June 2022. doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2022.106247

[SeaBOS demonstrates collaborative power of world's largest seafood companies](#)

—Emma Desrochers, *SeafoodSource*, 4 August 2022

Since its founding in 2016, the Seafood Business for Ocean Stewardship (SeaBOS) initiative—a collaboration of ten of the world's largest seafood companies across wild capture, aquaculture, and aquafeed production sectors—has made commitments resulting in progress toward reducing illegal fishing, better protection of endangered species, eliminating modern slavery, reducing use of antibiotics in global aquaculture, and a reducing plastic inventory. SeaBOS' work is organized around six task forces, each led by member companies, with agreed-upon, time-bound goals for each group. These cover IUU fishing; modern slavery and endangered species; communications; working with governments and anti-microbial resistance AMR; transparency and governance of SeaBOS, ocean plastics, and climate resilience. SeaBOS has developed a pilot project using deck cameras to identify species, catch volume, time/date, and GPS coordinates of fishing activity; a risk-mapping tool for labour abuse and illegal fishing; and a scientific assessment of commercial fishing best practices. SeaBOS is funded by the Walton Family Foundation, the Moore Foundation, and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

B. Forests & Land Use

Lack of clarity about government claims on peat restoration

—Dody Hidayat, *Tempo English*, 1 August 2022

The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) revealed that 20.27 million ha or 83.43% of Indonesia's total peat ecosystem area of 24.67 million ha are damaged. “Badly damaged and very badly damaged areas add up to 1.30 million ha, according to Sigit Reliantoro, Director-General of Pollution and Environmental Damage Control (PPKL). Dedy Wurjanto of the Peat and Mangrove Restoration Agency (BRGM) said that 835,288 ha of peat in seven provinces was restored over 2016 to 2020. Meanwhile, KLHK claims that it had restored 3.5 million ha of peat by the end of 2020 have confused experts. “We cannot verify the location[s] they claim to have restored,” said Yosi Amelia of the Civil Sustainability Foundation. “Data about this has never been made open, though we have asked for it.” Syahrul Fitra of Greenpeace Indonesia says the ministry gives the impression that its calculations are merely based on reports from companies owning concessions regarding plans for peatland restoration. “Has [KLHK] done field verification on the working plans or peat restoration by concession-owning companies?”

[Opinion: Half-hearted restoration of peatlands](#)

—*Tempo English*, 1 August 2022

Indonesia possesses the fourth largest expanse of peatlands in the world, but is unable to preserve this means of delaying the climate crisis. The area of damaged peatlands now reaches 84% of the total peatlands ecosystem, but there have been no strategic measures from the government to protect them and prevent further destruction. In Sumatra and Kalimantan, the rate of deforestation and conversion of peatlands into crop fields has doubled since the 1990s. Plantations are expanded by the cheapest way of clearing land, burning, which releases greenhouse gases. To help stave off the climate crisis, Indonesia must protect still undamaged peatlands and restore damaged areas, but these peatlands are controlled by many different institutions for various interests. Protecting peatlands could take the form of halting new concessions for plantations, mining or agriculture, followed by creating incentives for those who want to protect these areas through carbon trading. But the government more often favours extractive industries that wreck the peatlands ecosystems and create more carbon emissions.

[Indonesia's green belt—protecting and restoring the country's mangroves](#)

—André Rodrigues de Aquino, *World Bank Blogs*, 2 August 2022

Indonesia's forest and land use (AFOLU) sector has historically contributed the largest share of the country's greenhouse gas emissions, approximately 43% in 2016 according to the country's updated National Determined Contribution (NDC) to the United Nations. The government has enacted related policies, including converting forests and other types of land into “carbon sink” by 2030. Indonesia

harbours the largest area and greatest diversity of mangrove ecosystems in the world. In addition to supporting coastal livelihoods through fisheries and protecting coasts, mangroves in Indonesia store 3.14 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide, playing a significant role in mitigating global climate change. Despite this, mangroves are often lost and converted to other uses, including aquaculture, agriculture, and infrastructure (including housing and tourism). A recent study suggested that mangrove conversion over the past decade contributed to almost 200 million tonnes of CO₂ going into the atmosphere, equivalent to the electricity used in over 35 million homes. Mangrove restoration is costly—averaging US\$1,640 to \$3,900 per ha—and experiences a high rate of failure.

[Onset of the dry season brings yet more burning to Indonesia's forest fire capital](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 5 August 2022

As Indonesia's dry season sets in, forest fires are flaring up in Riau province, the perennial epicentre of the burning season in Sumatra. Since March, the scale of forest fires has intensified with more than 1,000 ha burned, according to the province's disaster mitigation agency, BPBD. More than half of the twelve districts and cities in Riau have declared a forest and land fire emergency. In Rokan Hilir district, where more than 100 ha are up in flames, some of the burning is occurring inside plantation concession areas and there is evidence that the fires were started deliberately, including discovery of discarded jerrycans in the burned areas, according to deputy district head Sulaiman. Riau police have arrested nine individuals suspected of arson. Dry season conditions are expected to continue through the month of August.

[Delectable but destructive: Tracing chocolate's environmental life cycle](#)

—Sean Mowbray, *Mongabay*, 1 August 2022

Key ingredients in chocolate (including cocoa from West African countries and Indonesia, palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia, and soy (soy lecithin) from Brazil) are currently traded via indirect supply chains with little traceability. These channels are among the main drivers of deforestation linked to agriculture. Producing countries face extensive deforestation due to agricultural production and will likely face more in the future as chocolate demand increases. A new paper reveals that traders purchasing these commodities via intermediaries account for “12-42% of soy sourcing, 15-90% of palm oil sourcing, and 100% of cocoa sourcing.” Life cycle assessment allows environmental hotspots along the supply chain from production and transport to packaging to be identified. In 2018, researchers estimated that the chocolate industry in the United Kingdom emits around 2.1 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent annually, with raw materials, chocolate production, and packaging the major hotspots. Deforestation is the major environmental cost of chocolate production, the aluminum foil and cardboard or paper often has a bigger carbon footprint than the plastic packaging.

Erasmus K. H. J. zu Ermgassen et al, “[Addressing indirect sourcing in zero deforestation commodity supply chains](#)”, *Science Advances* 8, 29 April 2022

[No permit? No problem for palm oil company still clearing forest in Papua](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 1 August 2022

More than 100 Indigenous people in Indonesia's Papua region have called on the local government to revoke all permits of a palm oil company that continues to clear land despite revocation of its forest release permit, which rezones forest to “other use areas”. As of June, the company, PT Permata Nusa Mandiri (PNM), had cleared more than 100 hectares, according to Greenpeace Indonesia. PNM and two other plantation companies filed lawsuits against the central government in Jakarta. The three are subsidiaries of the Indogunta Group, believed to be linked to the Salim Group, a major palm oil conglomerate that has pledged to stop clearing forest under a so-called shadow company arrangement. PNM's activities have sparked concern among the Namblong Indigenous community whose ancestral lands overlap the concession. The district government has sent a team to review licenses and permits and determine whether the local residents were given the opportunity to give free, prior, and informed consent to the project.

[Utopia of clean air, fruit and native trees, and wet peat amid Sumatra's forests fire “hell”](#)

—Suryadi, *Mongabay*, 1 August 2022

Sadikin, who maintains the Marsawa Peat Arboretum—a grove of timber, fruit and native trees—conceived of converting his parents' derelict vegetable garden into an orchard after losing his son to smoke exposure during one of the many forest fires that rate almost every year in Sumatra's Riau Province. "The arboretum is an excellent example of what good peat looks like," said Didy Wurjanto, head of public relations for the national Peatland and Mangrove Restoration Agency (BRGM). A member of the volunteer fire brigade in Sungai Pakning ward in Riau's Bengkalis district, Sadikin has worked to divert canals to quash peat fires and innovated the firefighting technique of digging shallow "hydrant" wells on peat. As a result, Sungai Pakning has been free of severe fires most years since 2016. Sadikin and others have also replanted 10 ha of burnt or partially burnt land as pineapple plantations, selling the fruit and using the fibrous leaves to weave bags and baskets that serve as planters and packaging.

C. Conservation & Protected Areas

[Update on StART project to rewild the zebra shark in Raja Ampat](#)

—Rebecca Bateman John, BirdsHeadSeascape.com, 2 August 2022

The StAR project involves aquariums all over the world donating and transporting viable Zebra Shark egg cases to two resorts in Indonesia's Raja Ampat for hatching, rearing, tagging and release. Zebra sharks were once common in the region, but due to shark finning the population had become too small and geographically fragmented to allow the species to recover like other species have since Raja Ampat's shark fishing ban went into effect in 2013. Both hatcheries in Raja Ampat are now fully constructed and the Papua Diving Research and Conservation Centre (RARCC) hatchery has its full life support system up and running. Genotyping nearly 80 sharks from potential breeder facilities in the US, Europe, Asia and Australia has been finalized, and four institutions have been selected to send eggs to Raja Ampat: SeaLife Sydney Aquarium, Shark Reef at Mandalay Bay (Nevada), Chicago Shedd Aquarium, and Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha. An umbrella initiative called "ReShark" is being created to replicate this initiative with other endangered sharks and rays species.

[Saving Sumatran elephants starts with counting them, but Indonesia won't say how many are left](#)

—Dyna Rochmyaningsih, *Mongabay*, 8 August 2022

The last time the Indonesian government released an official figure for the number of Sumatran elephants (*Elephas maximus sumatranus*) thought to remain in the wild was 2007, and even that number—2,400-2,800 individuals—was based on surveys conducted in the early 2000s. Updated population statistics were supposed to be released in 2019 as part of an official 10-year plan for Sumatran elephant conservation, but while the draft plan by the Indonesian Elephant Conservation Forum was submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Forestry in 2017, the ministry has yet to release the document. *Mongabay* obtained a copy of the unreleased 2018-2029 elephant conservation plan, which reports that the population of Sumatran elephants now stands at 924-1,359, a drop of 52-62% from the 2007 figure. "Habitat loss is the main problem", the unreleased document explains.

["Chased from every side" — Sumatran elephants afflicted by forest loss and fragmentation](#)

—Dyna Rochmyaningsih, *Mongabay*, 8 August 2022

Sumatran elephants in North Aceh regency find themselves pinned in shrinking patches of forest amid the ongoing destruction of their habitat, primarily for oil palm plantations, forcing more frequent encounters with villagers and driving an increase in human-elephant conflicts. Aceh is home to Despite an ostensible moratorium on issuing new permits for corporate oil palm plantations, massive deforestation and land clearing continues. Aceh is thought to be home to 42% of the surviving population of Sumatran elephants in Indonesia. A few are in national parks, but most struggle to survive in oil palm and pulpwood concessions in Riau and Jambi provinces. "More than 85% of Sumatran elephants live outside conservation areas, according to Wahdi Azmi, who leads CRU Aceh, a local conservation area. In Aceh, four or five human-elephant conflicts are reported every day.

Police foil attempt to smuggle pangolin scales and hornbill beaks

—Apriadi Gunawan, *The Jakarta Post*, 10 August 2022

North Sumatra police arrested two men for attempting to smuggle 38 kg of pangolin scales and ten hornbill beaks worth an estimated Rp 2.1 billion (US\$140,000) to China. Pangolin products are used in traditional Chinese medicine. All eight pangolin species are protected under national and international laws, and two are listed as critically endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. Rangkong Indonesia, a hornbill conservation group, recorded 51 cases of hornbills being sold online from January 2017 to August 2021. Some hornbill species have been hunted to the brink of extinction.

Non-governmental organizations as interest groups and their roles in policy process: Insights from Indonesia forest and environmental governance

—Dwi Laraswati, Emma Soraya, Max Krott, et al, *Forest and Society* 6:2, 14 May 2022. doi.org/10.24259/fs.v6i2.19125

Traditional conceptions and claims of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have presented NGOs as civil society representatives and as benevolent philanthropic actors of development, but recent phenomena indicate NGOs often act in opposition to their claims. This study analyses how NGOs fulfill their roles as organized interest groups (OIGs), representing the interests of particular groups within society and exerting political influence on governments on the basis of these common interests. Using empirics from Indonesian forest and environment-related governance, the study establishes three overarching categories of OIGs: 1) en route to fulfilling the claim, 2) breaking the claim, and 3) opposing the claim. The study identified 38 OIGs in the cases of social forestry and timber legality policies and populated them according to the typologies. We found that most of them are en route to fulfilling the claim of representing the groups' interests, although their political influence on the government was in most cases limited.

More than half of data deficient species may be threatened by extinction

—*Nature Asia*, 5 August 2022

Among all species whose extinction risk cannot be assessed for the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species because of lack of sufficient ecological data, 56% are likely at risk of extinction, according to a new paper, which found that data deficient species may be more threatened by extinction than other species that have been assessed. A machine learning algorithm was used to calculate the likely extinction risk for 26,363 species, including 7,699 that were data deficient using geographic data and other factors known to influence biodiversity, including climate change, land use by humans, and threats from invasive species. The analysis found that 4,336 or 56% are likely threatened with extinction. Risk levels varied among different categories, with 85% of amphibians, 40% of ray-finned fishes, 59% of reptiles and 62% of insects facing high extinction risk. One-third to one-half of data deficient marine species around the world's coastlines were predicted to be at risk.

Jan Borgelt et al, "[More than half of data deficient species predicted to be threatened by extinction](https://doi.org/10.1038/s42003-022-03638-9)", *Communications Biology* 5:679 (4 August 2022). doi.org/10.1038/s42003-022-03638-9

D. Energy, Mining, & Climate Change

Government fast-tracking households transition from LPG cookers to electric induction stoves

—Purwani Diyah Prabandari, *Tempo English*, 8 August 2022

The government is fast-tracking households' transition from LPG cookers to induction stoves running on electricity as gas prices soar. Under a PLN pilot program, 1,000 residents of Bali and 1,000 more in Solo,

Central Java received free induction cookers in July. President Joko Widodo has lauded the program as a way to lower consumption of gas, which is mostly imported. The current subsidized price for a 3 kg LPG canister is Rp 7,000 (US\$ 0.46) per kg, far below the non-subsidized price of Rp 17,000 (US\$ 1.13). According to the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, the cost of the LPG subsidy could reach Rp 127 trillion (US\$ 8.5 billion) if the price of crude oil exceeds US\$ 100/barrel. The ministry also sees the induction stove program as a way to soak up PLN's surplus coal-fired electricity in the grid-linked regions of Java and Bali. If adopted by 35 million households, the induction cooker program could increase consumption of electricity by 7 gigawatts (GW), reducing subsidy costs while saving foreign exchange.

Finance Minister: Indonesia plans large energy subsidies for 2023

—Reuters via [Kontan.co.id](https://www.kontan.co.id), 8 August 2022

Indonesia will allocate very large energy subsidies in 2023 to stabilize prices even as the government predicts windfall revenues from high commodity prices to decline, Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati said after a cabinet meeting. Southeast Asia's largest economy budgeted Rp 502 trillion (US \$33.75 billion) in subsidies and compensations this year to keep fuel prices and power tariffs unchanged and control domestic inflation amid soaring global energy prices. President Joko Widodo also ordered the 2023 budget to hold the deficit under 3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Sri Mulyani said. The minister predicted that Indonesia's crude oil prices will fall to US\$ 90 a barrel next year, while coal prices could moderate to US\$ 200 a tonne and crude palm oil (CPO) prices to under US\$ 1,000 per tonne. Between January and July this year, Indonesia had a budget surplus of Rp 106.1 trillion (US\$ 7.13 billion) or about 0.57% of GDP.

Green energy bill raises doubts about government commitment to new and renewable energy

—Divya Karya, *The Jakarta Post*, 1 August 2022

The House of Representatives (DPR) has begun deliberating the long awaited new and renewable energy (NRE) bill, but points of contention remain. The bill mandates increasing the domestic market obligation (DMO) for coal from 25 to 30% of total production while maintaining the current DMO price cap. Sugeng Suparwoto, the head of House Commission VII overseeing energy and mining, said increasing the coal DMO was important considering that new coal-fired power plants with a generating capacity of 35,000 MW would begin operating soon. However, this would mean domestic consumption by coal-fired power plants could reach 175 million tonnes per year, 54.8% higher than in 2021. Also, the pricing mechanism for NRE remains unclear, raising concern that there will not be fair competition between fossil fuel-based and renewable energy producers. Another problem is that the state-owned electricity monopoly PLN would only be prepared to purchase rooftop solar electricity offtake from premium corporate customers, leaving small businesses and private citizens with no incentive to install rooftop solar.

Building Indonesia's "green" new capital could see coal use surge

—Chun Sheng Goh, *Mongabay*, 2 August 2022

The government touts Nusantara—Indonesia's planned new capital in East Kalimantan on the island of Borneo—as a "green" city, but building could create a surge in carbon emissions, putting the country's climate goals at risk. East Kalimantan is Indonesia's coal mining heartland. Once completed, Nusantara may rely more extensively on solar, wind, and hydropower from mega dams on the Kayan River. Construction of the new city will increase demand for cement, iron, steel, and glass, which in 2020 accounted for about 16% of global CO₂e emissions. Firly Rachmaditya Baskoro, of the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) says building Nusantara could increase demand for cement by one third (or 21 million tonnes per year) for the next twenty years. "For this, the government has increased the coal domestic market obligation (DMO) for cement manufacturing from 4.5 million tonnes in 2021 to 15 million tonnes in 2022-2025, just to ensure coal supply for the growth in cement industry," Firly says.

Top Islamic leaders in pact to raise awareness about climate change among Muslims MOVE

—Dio Suhenda, *The Jakarta Post*, 31 July 2022

Indonesia's top Islamic leaders have formed a congress to raise awareness about the impacts of climate change and mobilize support among the Muslims. The forum, called the Muslim Congress for a Sustainable Indonesia, was launched at Jakarta's Istiqlal Grand Mosque and a treatise detailing recommendations handed to Vice President Ma-ruf Amin, a former Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) leader. The document stressed that climate change has already had significant impacts on all business sectors and people's way of life. It called for systematic environmental solutions based on Islamic values and rooted in local wisdom, adding that they should be financed by Islamic community funds such as alms and *waqf* (religious endowment), and highlighted the important roles of religious institutions, including mosques and Islamic boarding schools, in cultivating environmentally friendly behavior. In addition to MUI, the leading Islamic clerical body, participants also came from Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, Indonesia's largest Muslim organizations, as well as scholars from Gadjah Mada University and the Istiqlal Global Fund (IGF), a philanthropic body.

E. Pollution & Waste

Old plastic new bottles — plastic waste recycling expands industry expands

—Purwani Diyah Prabandari, *Tempo English*, 8 August 2022

Namasindo Plas, a plastic packaging company, pioneered the plastic waste recycling industry in Indonesia in 2008 by producing large drinking water bottles made from recycled polyethylene terephthalate (rPET) at its factory in Bandung Regency, West Java. Four years later, the company added a solid-state polycondensation (SSP) machine which absorbs hazardous organic residues that could be left over from the garbage-handling process. Namasindo partners with three major collection centers in Bali-Lombok, Bandung and Tangerang (Banten) to supply raw materials in the form of plastic flakes that have been sorted, ground and washed to meet food grade standards. "The bottles have to be from drinking water bottles," a company official explained. Danone-Aqua, producer of Aqua bottled drinking water, released bottles made of 100% rPET in 2019 in Denpasar, Bali. Namasindo's rPET recycling machine can produce 1,200-1,300 tonnes per month, most of which goes to supplying Danone-Aqua bottles. The company now faces competition from new entrants, some focusing on recycling single-use plastic bags taken from garbage final disposal sites.

Microplastic pollution in Jakarta increased ten-fold during the pandemic

—Dewi Elvia Muthiariny, *Antara via Tempo English*, 3 August 2022

Microplastic waste near river outlets of Jakarta Bay increased by a factor of ten from the time the first case of Covid-19 was detected in Indonesia in March 2020 to one year later, according to a study by the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), University of North Sumatra (USU), and the University of Portsmouth in Britain. Researchers found up to 9.02 particles of microplastic per 1,000 liters of river water, according to Reza Cordova, a BRIN researcher. The microplastic waste was in the form of threads originating from personal protective equipment of the same form and chemical composition as medical masks. According to Reza, the highest level of microplastic pollution was found during the rainy season, with an average of 9.02 particles per 1,000 liters of river water, while the lowest was 8.01 particles per 1,000 liters during the dry season. The researchers called for implementing strict regulations, dissemination and public understanding of correct disposal methods for plastic waste, especially related to PPE waste including face masks.

F. Investment & Finance

Indonesian firms look inward for financing as global volatility runs amok

—Vincent Fabian Thomas, *The Jakarta Post*, 4 August 2022

Economic uncertainty is forcing firms in Indonesia and elsewhere to fulfill financing needs domestically as capital markets turn volatile, dampening corporate bond issuance. The bond issuance drop happened amid increasing global uncertainty, stemming from high inflation induced by the war in Ukraine and supply disruptions that struck many countries. This was followed by aggressive monetary tightening in advanced

economies, raising costs for firms which need to issue bonds or simply refinanced debt. As a result, Indonesian companies must increasingly rely on domestic banks and capital markets to meet refinancing needs, Moody's reported. Felita, senior analyst at Fitch Ratings Indonesia told *The Jakarta Post* on July 29 that the impact of weakening global growth and geopolitical tension had been more pronounced in the offshore market, whereas the domestic issuance was relatively unaffected.

G. Other

[Ukraine war highlights differences between Indonesian and US foreign policy frameworks](#)

—Anne Marie Murphy, *East Asia Forum*, 5 August 2022

Washington policymakers typically perceive the US as a principled, responsible global power dedicated to promoting a liberal, rules-based order, while Indonesia, viewing great powers with suspicion, seeks to promote its interests free from the *diktats* of great power, which often is operationalized as non-alignment. Indonesia does not view the US as a benign power. In the 1950s, US-supported secessionist rebels threatened Indonesia's territorial integrity. After post-referendum violence in East Timor, the US imposed a military embargo on Indonesia and mobilized international condemnation of Jakarta in the United Nations—a coercive policy containing elements similar to current Western policy toward Russia. Many Indonesians reject the moral framing of the US response to Russia as hypocritical, asking how its invasion of Ukraine differs from the US war against Iraq. Public opinion in Indonesia is shaped by anti-American sentiment and through social media, where Russian disinformation is rife. As chair of the Group of 20 (G20), Indonesia rejected proposals that Russian president Vladimir Putin be disinvited from the November G20 Summit.

[President Joko Widodo seeks international stage](#)

—M. Habib Pashya and Muhammad Zulfikar Rakhmat, *Asia Sentinel*, 6 August 2022

As Joko Widodo's second and final five-year term starts to wind down, the President is burnishing his credentials as an international statesman and working to put Indonesia on the diplomatic map. Widodo wrapped up a three-country tour of China, Japan, and south Korea in July, concluding a flock of agreements to benefit the Indonesian economy while also demonstrating that the country remains firmly unaligned at a time when the US and its allies seek to lure it into a stronger stance against an China and its claims of hegemony over the South China Sea. The trip was also at one with Indonesia's year-long stewardship of the Group of 20, which has been made uncommonly sensitive due to the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Widodo has visited Russia, Ukraine, and Germany as part of his efforts as a peacemaker. He has invited not only Russian President Vladimir Putin to attend the October meeting in Bali but also Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky.

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M. Habib Pashya is a student in International Relations at the same university.

[Indonesia, US hold joint military exercises amid heightened Indo-Pacific tensions](#)

—Reuters via [Kontan.co.id](https://www.kontan.co.id), 29 July 2022

Some 4,000 soldiers mostly from Indonesia and the US are participating in the "Super Garuda Shield" joint military exercise from August 1-14 which the US called larger in scope and scale than previous annual exercises. The exercises also involve troops from Singapore, Australia, and Japan, which is participating for the first time, as well as observers from eleven other countries. Sites include Army training grounds in South Sumatra, Marine training grounds in Riau Islands, and army headquarters in Balikpapan, East Kalimantan. But US Major General Stephen G. Smith, who will be directing operations on the ground in the exercise, told reporters in Jakarta that the drill should not be seen as a response to any tensions.

I. Tourism recovery in Indonesia

[Number of inbound foreign tourists grows for third straight month](#)

—Divya Karyza, *The Jakarta Post*, 2 August 2022

The number of foreign visitors to Indonesia rose for the third month in a row in June, reaching 345,440, up 62.7% from a month earlier and a 20-fold increase over June 2021, following a change in entry rules to let tourists from more countries into Indonesia using a visa-on-arrival (VoA) rather than being required to apply for a visa in advance and revoking of the requirement for foreign and domestic visitors to provide a negative Covid-19 test on arrival. Indonesia received over 13 million foreign tourists in 2019, but that number plummeted to 2.2 million in 2020 and only 141,211 in 2021. Room occupancy at luxury hotels was 50.28% in June, a slight increase over May. “Many hotels still offer discounts because their occupancy rates [remain low], said Hariyadi Sukamdani, chairman of the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association (PHRI), adding that costly air tickets made it difficult for domestic tourists from Java to fly to eastern Indonesia.

[Lake Toba tourism starts picking up again](#)

—Tonggo Simangunsong, *The Jakarta Post*, 3 August 2022

Lake Toba is one of many tourist destinations in Indonesia that were affected during the Covid-19 epidemic. In December 2021 the number of foreign tourists visiting North Sumatra was zero, but 494 foreign visitors made it there this April and over 3,000 in May. Uncertain economic and political conditions in Europe and skyrocketing world oil prices following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine are among the reasons the number of foreign visitors to sites like Lake Toba have remained limited. “We can’t expect many foreign tourist arrivals if the situation abroad is not yet stable,” said the manager of a travel service which previously specialised in taking tourist groups from Europe to Lake Toba. International and domestic flights are both much more expensive than before the pandemic, and the frequency of flights on many routes remains low. “So, the effort to revive [tourism] depends on the price of airline tickets, because this is the biggest component in tour packages,” he said.

[Activists condemn “repressive” treatment of Komodo ticket-price-hike protestors](#)

—A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil, *The Jakarta Post*, 7 August 2022

Activists condemned the police handling of protests against the Komodo entry-ticket price hike, saying it shows the government responded with repression to criticisms that the development disenfranchised the local residents and the tourism industry. On 1 August, the price for entry to Komodo and Padar Islands in Komodo National Park was raised from Rp 200,000 (US\$13.30) to Rp 3.75 million (US\$250), ostensibly to protect the Komodo habitat, but local community leaders and tourism providers argued that reducing the overall number of visitors would reduce their income and that designating Rinca Island in the park as the destination for mass tourism to Komodo would put pressure on its habitat and undermine conservation efforts. In protest, tourism providers began a month-long strike. Roni Septian, head of policy advocacy at the Consortium for Agrarian Reform (KPA) said that the increased ticket price was an attempt to deprive the locals of their livelihood in favour of privatization and monopoly over tourism management at the national park.

Government postpones Komodo park price hike to January 2023

—News Desk, *The Jakarta Post*, 9 August 2022

Following an outcry from local residents, tourism businesses and activists, the Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) provincial government has postponed applying the new admission price for Komodo National Park “following suggestions from various parties and on the direction of President Joko Widodo”, NTT Tourism Office head Zeth Sony Libing was quoted as saying. “The NTT administration is open to suggestions, including from religious and community leaders,” he added. Komodo dragons are found only in Komodo National Park and parts of neighboring Flores Island. According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), just 3,458 adult and baby dragons are left in the wild.

II. The conflict in the Papua region

Hopes for peace dim as Papuan armed group steps up its attacks

—Tenggara Strategics, *Tenggara Backgrounder*, 3 August 2022

Violence in Papua took a new turn after video footage showing members of a Papuan armed group claiming to represent the West Papuan Liberation Army (TPNB) beheading a man in Pegunungan Bintang regency circulated on 19 July, days after TPNB members perpetrated an ambush that claimed at least ten lives. Members of the House of Representatives (DPR) have called for the Indonesian military to switch to a more aggressive approach, but TNI Chief Andika Perkasa indicated there would be no change, adding that TNI and the police have been conducting joint operation Cartenz Damai aimed at restoring peace and order in Papua. A leader of the Papuan Customary Council [*Dewan Adat Papua*, or DAP, an *adat* institution not legally recognized by the Indonesian government] said the threats and violence by armed groups was a response to Jakarta's decision to divide Papua into five provinces. However, a National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM) representative said rebel groups are split in response to the formation of new provinces.

Report claims Indonesia's Papua region at risk of mass violence

—Sebastian Strangio, *The Diplomat*, 27 July 2022

Papua, the easternmost region of Indonesia, displays “early warning signs” of mass atrocities linked to the unresolved grievances of indigenous Papuans and the worsening conflict between pro-independence insurgents and the Indonesian state, according to a report by the Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide. Tensions have simmered since 1969 when the region was incorporated into Indonesia following a flawed United Nations referendum, but the situation worsened in recent years as deepened encroachment by the Indonesian state has prompted more attacks by pro-independence insurgents. Papua province in particular has become increasingly militarized as the government strengthened its security presence in response to attacks by separatists. The report cited three precipitating factors similar to those present in other past episodes of mass violence: a recent cycle of protests, riots, and communal mobilization; increasing divisions among indigenous Papuans that “could increase the vulnerability of pro-independence civilians to attacks and/or lead pro-independence groups to contemplate extreme measures; and the escalating conflict between Papuan rebels and the Indonesian military.

Report: [*Don't Abandon Us": Preventing Mass Atrocities in Papua, Indonesia*](#), Early Warning Country Report, July 2022. Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum