



## 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 that 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 website at [www.starlingresources.com](http://www.starlingresources.com). If you would like to add colleagues or friends to our distribution list or unsubscribe, please contact us at [newsdigest@starlingresources.com](mailto:newsdigest@starlingresources.com).*

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### A. Marine and Fisheries

#### [Small-scale fishers in Indonesian isles flag use of banned net by outsiders](#)

—Moh. Tamimi, *Mongabay*, 7 September 2023

Traditional fishers in the Masalembu Islands, located in one of the most heavily trafficked fishing zones in the Java Sea, have filed a petition to the government to designate an exclusive fishing zone that disallows larger trawlers using *cantrang*—a banned type of net that threatens their livelihoods and the marine environment. The petitioners say that larger

boats from other regions often encroach into the 12-nautical-mile zone off the islands' coast, which across the archipelago is legally reserved for small-scale fishers using boats smaller than 10 GT. The *cantrang* ban has been a contentious issue in Indonesia, especially among fishers from the north coast of Java (Pantura) who represent a large voting bloc. The ban was lifted and reimposed with changing fisheries ministers over the past decade and despite being in place today, weak law enforcement allows continuous overfishing and environmental damage, affecting the food security and income of millions of people who depend on it.

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## B. Forests and Land Use

### [Kellogg's latest to freeze Indonesian supplier over palm oil violations](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 14 September 2023

U.S. cereal giant Kellogg's has joined nine other major consumer brands in suspending its purchases of palm oil from Astra Agro Lestari (AAL), the second-largest palm oil company in Indonesia. The decision comes after a 2022 report by environmental and human rights groups accused AAL and its subsidiaries of land grabbing, environmental degradation, failure to meet legal requirements and criminal persecution of local communities in Sulawesi. AAL denied the allegations and launched an independent investigation, but has not taken any steps to remedy the harm allegedly done. Activists have called on AAL to return the land taken without consent, restore the environment, and compensate the affected communities. Activists argue that AAL's investigation unfairly places the burden of proof on local communities, and they call on other consumer goods companies and investors to hold AAL accountable. Compliance with these issues is essential, particularly in light of the new European regulation on deforestation, which requires companies to eliminate deforestation and human rights abuses from their supply chains when selling products in the EU market.

**Report:** Conant, J. and Madan, G. (2022) [No Consent: Astra Agro Lestari's land grab in Central and West Sulawesi, Indonesia](#). Friends of the Earth (FoE)/WALHI.

### [Court ruling spares Papua forest from further clearing for palm oil](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 11 September 2023

The Indonesian court has ordered a palm oil company to stop clearing a forest area in Papua that is home to endangered animals and indigenous communities. The lawsuit was filed by environmental groups against PT Nabire Baru, a subsidiary of the Goodhope Asia Holdings group, for violating environmental laws and threatening the habitat of the southern crowned pigeon (*Goura scheepmakeri*), a rare and protected bird species. The company also failed to obtain the consent of the indigenous Yerisiam Gua people, who depend on the forest for their livelihoods. The court fined the company US\$32.6 million for environmental damages, and ordered the company to stop clearing the forest and restore the damaged area. The ruling was welcomed by the plaintiffs and their supporters, who said it was a victory for environmental justice and indigenous rights. The case is one of several legal challenges against palm oil companies operating in Papua, Indonesia's easternmost region.

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## C. Biodiversity, Conservation, and Protected Area

### [Pertamina conservation program expands to preserve Mahakam River Irrawaddy dolphins](#)

—*TheJakartaPost*, 11 September 2023

Pertamina, the Indonesian state-owned electricity company, has shown its commitment to environmental sustainability and biodiversity by expanding its Endemic Conservation Program (KOMIK) for the Irrawaddy Dolphin in East Kalimantan. The program aims to protect the critically endangered dolphins that live in the Mahakam River and support the local community's tourism development. The program, which was launched in 2019, involves various activities such as installing acoustic pingers on fishing nets to prevent dolphin entanglement, establishing a nautical museum as an education center for tourists, and collaborating with community-based tourism groups to ensure that tourist boats do not disturb the dolphin habitat. The program also supports the implementation of a village regulation that prohibits non-environmentally friendly fishing gear. The program has received international recognition for its contribution to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically goal 14 regarding marine ecosystems and goal 8 regarding decent work and economic growth.

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## D. Climate Change, Energy, and Mining

### [Singapore plan to import Indonesia clean energy advancing as region develops renewables 'faster and bigger than people realise'](#)

—*Bloomberg*, 8 September 2023

Singapore and Indonesia are advancing plans to cooperate on clean energy projects, as the renewable energy sector grows in the region. The project, known as the Singapore-Indonesia Green Energy Link, aims to supply up to 100 megawatts of clean power to Singapore by 2024 via subsea cables to help diversify its energy mix and reduce its reliance on natural gas, which accounts for about 95 % of its electricity generation. Singapore's renewable energy options are limited due to its small land area and lack of wind resources, while Indonesia, has abundant renewable energy potential, especially in hydropower, geothermal, solar and wind. The project is expected to benefit both countries by enhancing their energy security, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating economic opportunities. It is also seen as a model for regional cooperation on clean energy, as Southeast Asia faces the challenge of meeting its growing energy demand while tackling climate change.

### [Pertamina develops carbon capture and storage technology to achieve NZE 2060](#)

—*TheJakartaPost*, 12 September 2023

Pertamina, Indonesia's state-owned oil and gas giant, is advancing its efforts in carbon capture storage and utilization (CCS/CCUS) technology to align with the government's ambitious target of achieving net-zero emissions by 2060. At the 2023 International & Indonesia Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) Forum in Jakarta, Pertamina's President Director and CEO, Nike Widyawati, outlined the company's commitment to serving as a sustainable national energy provider while simultaneously offering carbon reduction solutions to bolster the economy. Pertamina's dedication to CCUS is evident through its active engagement in CO<sub>2</sub> injection activities across various Pertamina Fields. Research indicates that Indonesia boasts a substantial potential storage capacity of up to 400 gigatons in its sedimentary basins. Furthermore, Indonesia's strategic geographical location situates it favorably for cross-border CO<sub>2</sub> transportation, positioning the nation as a potential CCS hub within the Asia-Pacific region. As Pertamina continues to innovate in CCS/CCUS technology, it strives to play a pivotal role in Indonesia's transition toward a greener and more sustainable energy future.

### [PLN's ambitious renewables target lacks govt support](#)

—Aditya Madi, *TheJakartaPost*, 11 September 2023

State-owned electricity company PLN has ambitiously increased its target share of renewable energy in its power generation mix to 23% by 2025. According to PLN's 2021-2030 long-term electricity procurement plan (RUPTL), the company plans to add 41.3 gigawatts (GW) of renewable power plants to its system, increasing the renewable energy portion from 12.36% in 2020 to 23.23% in 2025. However, analysts said that PLN's target was too optimistic, given the slow progress of renewable energy development in the past decade and the lack of incentives and regulations from the government. They pointed out that PLN still relied heavily on coal-fired power plants, which accounted for 54.4% of its power generation mix in 2020 and would still make up 48.5% in 2025. They also noted that PLN faced financial challenges and technical issues in integrating renewable energy into its grid. The analysts urged the government to provide more support for PLN's renewable energy transition.

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## **E. Pollution and Waste**

### [El Niño leads to more fires and toxic air pollution in Indonesia](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 15 September 2023

Increased land and forest fires across Indonesia due to this year's El Niño is exacerbating the air pollution crisis in the country. The Environment and Forestry Ministry reported a fourfold increase in hotspots from January to September 2023, compared to the same period last year. September is the peak of the fire season and most of the fires occurred in 10 provinces that are historically prone to burning. The fires have produced toxic smog that has affected the health and well-being of millions of people, especially in major cities like Palembang, where the air quality index reached hazardous levels. Residents have suffered from respiratory problems due to a high concentration—21 times higher than what the World Health Organization considers safe—of PM2.5, a fine particulate matter that can penetrate deep into the lungs. Most of the hotspots are detected within concession areas, sparking skepticism regarding the commitment of permit holders in preventing fires within their areas.

### [Breathless Jakartans irate over pollution crisis](#)

—Agnes Anya, *TheJakartaPost*, 13 September 2023

Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, is facing a severe air pollution crisis that has triggered public outrage and legal action. The city's air quality index (AQI) has consistently ranked among the worst in the world, reaching hazardous levels on several occasions. The main sources of pollution are vehicle emissions, coal-fired power plants, industrial activities, and forest fires. The poor air quality has caused various health problems for the residents, such as respiratory infections, asthma, allergies, and even cancer. The government has been accused of neglecting the issue and failing to implement effective measures to reduce emissions and protect public health. A group of citizens has filed a lawsuit against the president, the governor of Jakarta, and several ministers, demanding that they take action to improve the air quality, enforce the existing environmental laws and seek compensation for the damages caused by the pollution. The plaintiffs hope that the lawsuit will raise awareness and pressure the authorities to address the problem.

### [Coal Plant Costs Indonesia \\$1 Billion in Health Loss, Study Says](#)

—Norman Harsono, *BNNBloomberg*, 11 September 2023

A study by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) estimates that using the best available technology to control the emissions from the Suralaya coal power plant near Jakarta could save Indonesia nearly US\$1 billion a year in health costs. The plant, which is the largest coal-fired facility in Southeast Asia, emits harmful pollutants that affect the air quality and health of millions of people in the capital and surrounding areas. The health costs include premature deaths, medical expenses, and work absences caused by respiratory and cardiovascular diseases linked to air pollution. The study also urges the Indonesian government to take more serious measures to tackle emissions from coal plants, such as implementing sustainable finance policies, promoting renewable energy sources, and ultimately replacing them with cleaner alternatives. The study warns that coal plants contribute to one of the most serious air pollution crises on the planet, as well as to global warming and climate change.

**Report:** Kelly, J. *et al.* (2023) [Air quality impacts of the Banten-Suralaya complex](#). Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air.

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## F. Investment and Finance

### [Suralaya coal plant under fire for expansion project](#)

—Arie Firdaus, *TheJakartaPost*, 15 September 2023

Residents of Cilegon, Banten province, have filed a complaint against the World Bank Group for indirectly financing the expansion of a coal-fired power plant in Suralaya village. The complaint alleges that the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, invested in a bank that provided funds for the project. The project involves adding two power generation units to the existing Suralaya power plant complex, which is already the largest coal-fired facility in Southeast Asia. The expansion will increase the output capacity by 2,000 megawatts, making it one of the biggest coal plants in the world. Residents argue that the project will increase air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption, and coal ash disposal. They say that the project violates the World Bank's own policies and standards on environmental and social safeguards, and demands that the World Bank withdraw its investment from the bank involved in the project, and that the IFC stop supporting any coal-related activities in Indonesia.

### [Jokowi Says Hyundai-LG's EV Battery Plant in Indonesia is Southeast Asia's Largest](#)

—Ichsan Ali, *JakartaGlobe*, 14 September 2023

Indonesian President Jokowi, announced that Hyundai Motor Group and LG Energy Solution's electric vehicle (EV) battery plant in Indonesia is set to become Southeast Asia's largest. This facility, located in Karawang, West Java, aims to produce lithium-ion batteries for electric vehicles, supporting Indonesia's push toward EV adoption and reducing carbon emissions. The project includes an investment of around US\$1.1 billion and is expected to create thousands of jobs. Jokowi emphasized the importance of this development for Indonesia's automotive industry and its potential to strengthen the country's position in the global EV market. The Indonesian government has been actively encouraging EV production and adoption by offering incentives and infrastructure development to boost the EV market's growth, and Hyundai and LG's investment signifies their confidence in Indonesia as a key player in the sector. The venture reflects the growing interest in Southeast Asia's EV industry as the region pivots toward sustainable transportation solutions.

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## G. Human Rights and Gender Equality

### Young mother's 'murder' raises issue of support for domestic abuse victims

—Nina A. Loasana, *TheJakartaPost*, 18 September 2023

The death of a young mother, killed by her abusive husband, has sparked outrage and criticism over the handling of domestic violence cases in Indonesia. The case has highlighted the lack of support and protection for victims of domestic abuse in Indonesia, where such cases are often considered a private matter and not a criminal offense. According to the Legal Aid Foundation for Women (LBH Apik), there were 406,178 cases of domestic violence reported in 2020, an increase of 14 percent from the previous year. LBH Apik and other civil society groups have urged the government to improve the response and prevention of domestic violence, by providing more shelters, counseling, legal aid, and education for victims and perpetrators. They have also called for more training and sensitivity for law enforcement officers who deal with domestic violence cases.

### NGOs in West Papua criticise Komnas HAM for lack of responsiveness

—*HumanRightsNews*, 12 September 2023

The National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) is under scrutiny for its perceived sluggish response in investigating alleged human rights violations in Dogiyai Regency, Papua Tengah Province. Criticism has arisen due to delays in completing investigations into two separate shooting incidents, one in January 2023 and another in July 2023, which has sparked concerns of exacerbating conflicts and tensions in the region. The delayed investigations raise fears of escalating conflict, internal displacement, governance disruptions, economic setbacks, and heightened tensions between indigenous Papuans and non-Papuan communities. Critics argue that Komnas HAM should prioritize and expedite West Papua investigations, given the region's complex and sensitive armed conflict. This situation underscores the challenges faced by human rights institutions in efficiently addressing alleged abuses in Papua, emphasizing the need for timely, thorough investigations to prevent conflict escalation and gather crucial evidence and testimonies.

### Indonesia police arrest 43 after riot over industrial park

—Ananda Teresia, *Reuters*, 12 September 2023

Indonesian police have apprehended 43 individuals on charges of inciting a riot and assaulting law enforcement officers during a demonstration against the proposed relocation of communities for a multi-billion dollar industrial park. The violent incident took place on Rempang island, located roughly 44 km from Singapore, as around 1,000 protesters gathered outside the BP Batam office, a developer for the planned Rempang Eco City. Local media captured footage of protesters hurling objects at police, breaking down barriers, while officers responded with water cannons and tear gas. The Rempang Eco City project is set to host a factory run by Chinese glass manufacturer Xinyi Glass Holdings Ltd, which plans to construct an \$11.5 billion quartz sand processing plant at the site. President Joko Widodo announced plans to provide land and housing to residents affected by the relocation, but he acknowledged a communication gap had exacerbated the situation.

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## I. Presidential Race

### VP talks intensify as three-way race takes shape

—Yerica Lai, *TheJakartaPost*, 19 September 2023

Three major electoral blocs have solidified for Indonesia's upcoming February elections following the recent decision of the Democratic Party to join the Prabowo Subianto camp. Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar have been confirmed as the first presidential pair and represent the NasDem Party-led alliance known as the "Coalition for Change". Now discussions centre around the likely presidential candidates to run alongside Prabowo (Gerindra) and Ganjar Pranowo (PDI-P). Prabowo now leads the Indonesia Onward Coalition, comprising Gerindra, Golkar, PAN, and smaller parties. The vice presidential selection within this alliance has triggered debates, with candidates like Airlangga Hartarto and Erick Thohir in contention. Outsiders like Gibran Rakabuming Raka and Yenny Wahid are also being considered. Meanwhile, the PDI-P-led alliance supporting Ganjar's presidential bid is narrowing down its vice presidential options, with names like Minister Erick, Mahfud MD, Sandiaga Uno, and Andika Perkasa in consideration. As the Indonesian presidential race intensifies, the selection of vice presidential candidates will play a crucial role in shaping the country's political future.

## II. Global Diplomacy

### Why Indonesia thinks it belongs in the OECD

—John West, *AsiaTimes*, 11 September 2023

Indonesia, the largest economy in Southeast Asia, has expressed its interest in joining the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a club of 38 mostly rich and developed countries. However, some experts and analysts have questioned Indonesia's readiness and suitability for the OECD, citing its low income level, weak governance, rampant corruption, and poor human development indicators. Indonesia's aspiration is driven by several factors, such as its desire to enhance its international reputation, attract more foreign investment, access better policy advice and best practices, and participate in global rule-making. The country also sees itself as a regional leader and a bridge between the developed and developing world. The OECD has not yet formally responded to Indonesia's request, but it has indicated that it is open to expanding its membership to include more emerging economies. However, the accession process is likely to be long and rigorous, requiring Indonesia to undergo a comprehensive review of its policies and practices and to adhere to hundreds of OECD legal instruments.

### Indonesia closes ASEAN Summit with mixed record

—Yvette Tanamal, *TheJakartaPost*, 9 September 2023

Indonesia wrapped up its role as the chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on Thursday with a ceremony to transfer the leadership to Laos, after nine months of leading the regional bloc amid various challenges and opportunities. The 43rd ASEAN Summit, held in Jakarta from Sept. 5 to 7, produced 90 outcome documents and several concrete agreements with dialogue partners, covering issues such as economic development, climate change, and regional security. A notable outcome was in the collective approach to the military crisis in Myanmar, which included barring their 2026 ASEAN chairmanship. However, Indonesia faced difficulties in addressing some of the most pressing problems in the region, such as the ongoing rising tensions between the United States and China over the South China Sea. Indonesia's chairmanship theme "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth" reflected its priority on economic cooperation and recovery, but also revealed its limitations in dealing with political and humanitarian issues that required more collective action and solidarity from ASEAN members.

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