



Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest

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*The **Indonesia Sustainable Development News Digest** is a biweekly collection of brief summaries of English-language articles related to conservation, environment and sustainability that have appeared in print or online in Indonesian, regional or global media. We welcome all comments, suggestions, and corrections.*

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A. The Covid-19 Crisis in Indonesia

[President Joko Widodo: Indonesia to gradually reopen regions with high vaccination rates](#)

—Stanley Widiyanto and Martin Petty, *Reuters*, 25 October 2021

Indonesia will gradually reopen parts of the country where COVID-19 vaccination rates are above 70%, President Joko Widodo told a Southeast Asian business forum. Widodo also Southeast Asia should start loosening their travel restrictions, including vaccinated lanes for inoculated arrivals with negative COVID-19 tests, adding that it was important the region reforms to prepare for future health crises. Earlier in October, Indonesia reopened the tourist island of Bali for some international travellers, including those from China, New Zealand, and Japan, among others.

[Ministry of Health: A Covid-19 third wave cannot be avoided](#)

—Editorial team, *Voice of Indonesia*, 22 October 2021

Siti Nadia Tarmizi, the spokesperson for Indonesia's Ministry of Health, said that a third wave or spike in Covid-19 cases cannot be avoided, but the pandemic is currently under control. On October 24, Indonesia reported 623 new Covid-19 cases, bringing the national total to 4,240,019, while the death toll increased by 29 to 143,205. "The Delta variant which now dominates in Indonesia can spread quickly, waiting for when we are careless so that it can cause a [new] increase in cases," especially if health protocols in communities become lax over the year-end holidays and religious holidays. The first wave of the pandemic in Indonesia took place from November 2020 to January 2021, with a second wave over June-July 2021.

[Government eases passenger caps and mandates PCR test for domestic flights](#)

—Nina A. Loasana and Dio Suhenda, *The Jakarta Post*, 22 October 2021

Indonesia has eased passenger capacity limits for airlines in a bid to boost economic recovery as the country gradually lifts most Covid-19 restrictions amid a general decline in corona-virus cases. Under the new rules in effect for domestic flights to and from airports in Java, Bali and regions under Level 3 and Level 4 multitiered public activity restrictions, airlines are allowed to operate at almost full capacity without any seat distancing. Passengers are required to present a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test taken two days before their scheduled flight. However, the House Speaker Puan Maharani criticized the new regulations as discriminatory, because many regions lack the supporting infrastructure to process PCR tests within two days as required. Griffith University epidemiologist Dicky Budiman also criticized the requirement for expensive PCR tests. "It is not cost effective and will but an extra financial burden on passengers, Dicky said. "A rapid antigen test a day before the flight is sufficient for screening purposes, especially if the passengers have already been fully immunized.

[State-owned charter airline Pelita Air may take over Garuda's domestic routes](#)

—Dzulfiqar Fathur Rahman, *The Jakarta Post*, 22 October 2021

The government is preparing for state-owned charter airline PT Pelita Air Service (PAS) to become a full-service airline and take over Garuda's domestic routes once Covid-19 travel restrictions are lifted in the event Garuda fails to renegotiate leases and restructure its Rp 70 billion (US\$4.94 billion) debt, Deputy Minister of State-Owned Enterprises Kartiko Wirjoatmodjo reportedly said. Pelita Air Service is a subsidiary of state-owned oil giant Pertamina. "Even if Garuda survives, it appears that Pelita will be the main airline under government ownership," aviation consultant Gerry Soedjatman said. The government recently opened Bali's Ngurah Rai International Airport to international flights, signalling the start of plans to recover air travel in Indonesia. Garuda may massively reduce its fleet, selling more than 80 aircraft and cancelling orders for 90 more, to concentrate on its low-cost carrier subsidiary Citilink.

B. Marine & Fisheries

[Indonesia urged to improve policies protecting fishing vessel workers](#)

—M. Ambari, Yoga Eki Saputra, *Mongabay*, 12 October 2021

Observers have called for strengthening regulations for recruitment, placement, repatriation, and legal reparation for crews aboard foreign and domestic vessels. Many vessels employing Indonesian crew engage in illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, including boats from neighboring countries operating illegally in Indonesian waters and foreign distant water fishing vessels which deliberately catch protected endangered species, according to Mohammad Abdi Suhufan, National Coordinator for Destructive Fishing Watch (DFW) Indonesia. On board, crews face potentially deadly working conditions, physical and mental abuse, and substandard food. The Indonesian labor and transportation ministries and some local governments have presided over parallel licensing regimes for recruiting migrant fishers, allowing fly-by-night recruiters to flourish, while the Indonesian fisheries ministry recently issued a decree focused on improving domestic fishing operations, Abdi said the ministerial regulation was a lost opportunity to beef up protections for deckhands working on foreign vessels. The Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and Investments is reportedly drafting a national action plan for protection of seafarers and deckhands working at home and abroad.

C. Forests & Land Use

[Why did Indonesia end its multi-million euro forest protection deal with Norway?](#)

—Ben Anthony Horton, *Asia France Press*, 13 October 2021

The collapse of a €867-million deal to curb Indonesian deforestation has highlighted problems with a UN-backed climate initiative. The REDD+ mechanism was established to provide funds to help developing countries reduce deforestation, which accounts for more than 8% of annual global CO₂ emissions, but the initiative has been dogged by controversy. Indonesia walked away from a €867-million (US\$ 1 billion) deal with Norway last month, having received only a fraction of the money. However changes "advanced more slowly than expected" and deforestation initially increased, while Indonesian authorities claim they did not receive expected payment of €48 million for slowing forest loss over the past five years. Indonesia said Norway had shown "no goodwill" and set additional requirements, such as documentation on how the money would be spent. Meanwhile, experts said slower forest loss since 2016 was due to slower economic growth and higher rainfall. The system should not be dumped altogether, but overhauled, according to WRI's Francis Seymour. "There is no way to meet the Paris targets without stopping tropical deforestation."

[Indonesia prepares carbon-trading rule ahead of COP26](#)

—A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil, *The Jakarta Post*, 24 October 2021

Indonesia is preparing its own carbon-trading regulation ahead of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland as it prioritizes pushing for the adoption of new international rules to govern carbon-emissions trading in the summit. "Currently, Indonesia is completing a draft of a Presidential Regulation on carbon economic value, which will regulate issues such as carbon trading

[mechanisms], carbon offset and results-based payment [from carbon-emission reduction],” said Laksmi Dewanthi, Director General of Climate Change Management (PPI) at the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK). Indonesia’s updated NDC, which has been submitted to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) secretariat, calls for reducing carbon emissions 29% independently by 2030, or 41% with international assistance. Based on prevailing trends, carbon emissions from Indonesia’s energy sector will surpass the forestry sector by 2025. The regulation as well as new international rules could result in new opportunities to develop credits for carbon sequestered in terrestrial and mangrove forests that currently can only be traded through voluntary carbon markets.

[Indonesia is missing out in carbon trading](#)

—Vincent Fabian Thomas, *The Jakarta Post*, 28 October 2021

While authorities in Indonesia work out the kinks of its budding emissions trading system, companies are taking matters into their own hands by trading carbon credits in voluntary markets overseas, with many flocking to Singapore’s new carbon exchange. “There are companies in Indonesia that implement emissions reductions projects, such as reforestation or clean energy, listed by internationally-accepted registries where the projects are verified and carbon units, or credits, issued on behalf of these companies,” explained Lamon Rutten, CEO of the Indonesia Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (ICDX). Indonesia has introduced a plan for a domestic carbon market in its new Harmonized Tax Law but has yet to explain how it would work other than it would take the form of a cap-and-trade mechanism combined with a carbon tax. The EU has been discussing higher import tariffs on goods produced with high carbon emissions. “If you cannot deliver a net zero [target] as an Indonesian company in the next few years,” Lamon added, “you will be thrown out of these supply chains.”

[Voluntary carbon markets: Companies eyeing net zero emissions have no clue how to get there](#)

—Sheryl Lee Tian Tong, *Mongabay*, 4 October 2021

In compliance carbon markets, companies that fail to meet specified carbon emission limits must buy credits to offset their greenhouse gas releases, but firms using voluntary carbon markets purchase credits to offset their carbon emissions of their own accord. “A hundred billion dollars of finance needs to flow from developed countries to developing countries every year, Piyush Gupta, CEO of DBS bank said at a panel on Scaling Voluntary Carbon Markets, but private capital available for developing countries has been insufficient, Laurence Fink, CEO of Black Rock said. Voluntary carbon markets could help make up the deficit, according to Standard Chartered CEO Bill winters, by moving “billions of dollars from the pockets of those making net-zero commitments into the hands of people who [can] actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the environment,” especially in Southeast Asia, where vast swaths of carbon-sequestering forests can be tapped. Sunny Verghese, CEO of Olam International, said corporations are struggling to find solutions to get to net zero by 2050, “[but] not one of us have a clue of how we are going to get there.”

[Green groups call for scrapping of \\$300m loan offer for Borneo road project](#)

—Basten Gokkon, *Mongabay*, 20 October 2021

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is considering a US\$300 million proposal from the Indonesian government to fund a 280-km road project across North and East Kalimantan provinces to boost economic growth and further the integration of Indonesian and Malaysian palm oil industries. But the plan faces opposition from environmentalists as researchers highlight the potential for environmental damage and social disruption to indigenous communities. “There are thousands of hectares of unrealized [oil palm] plantation concessions straddling the proposed roads,” said Angus MacInnes, project officer at the Forest People’s Programme, on 15 October. In 2015, nearly half the deforestation recorded in Indonesia, nearly 8,000 km² of forest loss, occurred there. “We are screening everything we do to see whether it is Paris-aligned,” Bruno Carrasco, ADB’s Director General said. But Darwis, a project officer at the indigenous-led NGO Green of Borneo, said that the roads will destroy ecosystems and take away customary lands. “The government says it’s for us, but it’s really for the palm oil industry and their plantations.”

[Greenpeace: Almost 20% of Indonesia's palm oil plantation area located in the forest estate](#)

—Rebecca Ratcliffe, *The Guardian*, 21 October 2021

Of the total 16.38 million hectares (Mha) of oil palm plantations in Indonesia, 3.12 Mha or 19% are located inside the country's forest estate (*Kawasan Hutan*) administered by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), despite a law banning industrial plantations outside the non-forest "area for other purposes" (*Areal Penggunaan Lain*, or APL) zones under the National Land Agency (BPN), according to a study by Greenpeace and TheTreeMap. The report describes a catastrophic failure of law enforcement that allowed swatches of land, including national parks, UNESCO sites, and areas previously mapped as habitat for orangutans and Sumatran tigers to be turned into oil palm plantations. At least 500 plantation companies had operations set up inside the forest estate. Kiki Taufik, global head of Greenpeace's Indonesian forests campaign, said that instead of enforcing the law, the government had offered increasingly lenient amnesties for such operations. A new amnesty introduced alongside last year's omnibus job creation bill could allow palm oil plantations occupying a further 665,945 ha of forest estate to legalize their operations.

Report: [Deceased Estate: Illegal palm oil wiping out Indonesia's national forest](#), Greenpeace Southeast Asia – Indonesia (October 2021)

[Paper giants' expansion plans raise fears of greater deforestation](#)

—Hans Nicholas Jong, *Mongabay*, 11 October 2021

Plans by two paper giants to significantly expand their production capacity in Indonesia could lead to increase loss of natural forest and peatlands in Indonesia. Asia Pulp & Paper (APP) and Asia Pacific Resources International Limited (APRIL) have been linked with deforestation and burning of peat forests in Sumatra and Kalimantan. More forest clearing could follow, according to Sergio Baffoni, senior campaign coordinator at the Environmental Paper Network (EPN). The Omnibus Law on Job Creation passed amid widespread protests last year dismantles environmental and labor protections across a range of industries, including pulpwood. APP said its planned expansion is "in compliance with the government's policy to increase environmentally-based investment." APP reportedly plans to increase annual capacity of its pulp mill in Ogan Komering Ilir (OKI) district, South Sumatra from 2.45 million tonnes of bleached hardwood kraft (BHK) pulp to 7 million tonnes of BHK pulp and 700,000 tonnes of mechanical pulp, which would require tripling the mill's annual demand for wood to 30.1 million tonnes.

[Deforestation from road expansion jeopardizes ecosystems in Papua and West Papua](#)

—Julie Mollins, *CIFOR Forest News*, 28 September 2021

Vast forests of the world's largest tropical island populated by unique and biodiverse flora and fauna now face multiple threats from deforestation, according to David Gaveau, a member of the IUCN Oil Palm Task Force. Overall, less forest loss has occurred in the Papuan provinces than in the rest of Indonesia, with only 2% of old growth forests cleared from 2001 to 2019. However, a team of scientists used six models to project how expansion of the Trans-Papua Highway, a 4,000 km national investment project, will be likely to correlate with new plantations, suggesting some 4.5 million ha of forest could be cleared by 2036 if the development in the Papuan provinces follow patterns similar to those observed in Kalimantan on the island of Borneo. With less land available elsewhere, agro-industries increasingly are turning to Papua and West Papua to establish new large monoculture plantations for palm oil, pulp and paper production, and mining. The hope is that the aspirations of local communities and conservation may align to help guard and protect nature.

Paper: David L. A. Gaveau, et al, "[Forest loss in Indonesian New Guinea \(2001-2019\): Trends, drivers and outlook](#)", *Biological Conservation* 261 (September 2021).

[Forest Stewardship Council \(FSC\) under fire for greenwashing deforestation](#)

—Malavika Vyawahare, *Mongabay*, 26 October 2021

As the annual meeting of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the world's most recognizable ethical wood and timber certification body, environmental NGOs accused the organization of failing to protect forests and indigenous communities and urged the council to commit to immediate reforms. In the last few months alone, FSC has been accused of failing to spot illegal logging in protected forests crucial to earth's climate, allowing vast volumes of suspect wood to be laundered through its supply chains in China, and lobbying to weaken draft EU rules aimed at protecting biodiversity. An open letter signed by Greenpeace, Environmental Investigation, Rainforest Action Network and 26 other NGOs said these are not stand-alone cases but rather systemic issues with certification, and called upon the organization to increase transparency, remove conflicts of interest, and take a tougher stance on companies caught flouting its rules. FSC was established in 1993 with the backing of WWF and Greenpeace, but Greenpeace broke with the organization in 2018.

Open Letter: [NGOs urge immediate reform at ethical wood label to fight global deforestation](#), Earthsight, 25 October 2021

[Indonesia develops 50,000 ha of new mangrove forests](#)

—A. Muh. Ibnu Aqil, *The Jakarta Post*, 18 October 2021

Indonesia, home to about a fifth of the world's mangrove forests, has gained more than 50,000 hectares of mangroves, according to the latest edition of its national mangrove map, as the government counts on the forestry sector, including mangroves, to contribute to its carbon-emission reduction goals. Mangroves, which usually grow in intertidal areas in tropical and sub-tropical countries, play a vital role in providing natural buffers against coastal erosion caused by sea or winds. But the condition of Indonesia's mangroves varies. About 3.1 million ha of mangroves are in good condition, defined as dense areas with over 70% tree coverage, while 242,000 ha of mangrove zones have less than 70% coverage. Coordinating Minister of Maritime Affairs and Investments Luhut Pandjaitan said the updated map would be used as a reference for nationwide "rehabilitation, conservation and monitoring of mangroves" and underlined the government's commitment to mangrove restoration as it aims to rehabilitate a total of 600,000 ha of mangrove forests across the country by 2024.

[Commentary: Donor agencies should ditch the club and embrace more locals](#)

—Aida Greenbury, *Mongabay*, 13 October 2021

When news of the decision by Indonesia to terminate a US\$1 billion forest conservation deal with Norway broke, I was initially saddened, but then I remembered: that US\$1 billion incentive is less than 10% of the assets of some large natural-resource-based companies in Indonesia. Palm oil exports alone brought in US\$18.5 billion in 2020. If forestry and mining, including exported coal are added in, the contribution would be much higher. In short, against the scale of these industries' contributions, Norway's US\$1 billion is not enough to curb deforestation. "We give money to most NGOs—our money is everywhere," a representative of a large donor once gloated arrogantly and rather sickeningly, considering the massive amount of carbon emissions his country contributes. I have a problem with non-local experts running discussions and projects about deforestation in countries like Indonesia. The real sustainable solutions to forest conservation will only be found when we embrace local communities, treat them as equals, let them lead and own the programs and get their full buy-in.

Aida Greenbury is a former Managing Director of Sustainability at APP Group.

D. Energy, Mining and Climate Change

[Painstakingly slow progress on renewable energy infrastructure](#)

—Divya Karyza, *The Jakarta Post*, 25 October 2021

The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources expects investment in new and renewable energy (NRE) to reach US\$1.44 billion by the end of the year, but this would still miss the year-end target again, according to the Director General in charge of renewables, Dadan Kusdiana. NRE project investments in 2021 so far total US\$1.12 billion, or 54% of the US\$2.04 billion full-year target, dominated by investment

in geothermal energy, bioenergy, and other NRE investments. Installed renewable capacity in 2020 is dominated by hydropower, geothermal and bioenergy, with solar and wind accounting for only a minuscule share. As of September 2021, installed solar rooftop generating capacity reached only 39.28 megawatts-peak (MWp), with 4,262 registered users. The government has targeted increasing Indonesia's installed NRE capacity (year-end 2020) from 10.9 GW, 15.4% of the total installed generating capacity of 71 GW, to 23% of the country's energy mix by 2025. Coal still accounts for 56% of electricity generation.

[How green is Indonesia's 10-year electricity procurement plan \(RUPTL\)?](#)

—Adila Isfandiari and Tata Mustasya, *The Jakarta Post*, 20 October 2021

When President Joko Widodo joins other heads of state at the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow from 31 October to 12 November, he will announce the new 10-year electricity procurement plan (RUPTL) as part of its commitment to achieve its emissions reductions targets. But is this credible, or merely greenwashing. Even after reducing the number of new coal-fired power plants, there will still be 13.8 gigawatts (GW) of new coal-fired capacity, leaving coal with a still dominant 59.4% share of Indonesia's total energy mix in 2030, more than twice the share of new and renewable energy. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has called for shutting down 80% of existing coal power plants by 2030 and phase them out completely by 2040, not continuing building new coal power plants which will remain in operation until 2055. Yet if Indonesia agreed to stop building new coal-fired power plants from 2021, the country still could only achieve a 26% share of renewable energy due to the huge existing capacity of toxic coal.

The authors are executives of Greenpeace Indonesia.

[Indonesia-China consortium begins study on US\\$560 million coal to methanol plant](#)

—*The Jakarta Post*, 21 October 2021

Indonesia's PowerIndo Cipta Energy (PCE) and the China National Chemical Engineering Corporation (CNCEC) have signed an agreement to begin a feasibility study for a US\$560 million coal-to-methanol gasification plant in Aceh. The plant would process 1.1 million tonnes of coal into 600,000 tonnes of methanol annually, about half of last year's domestic demand, employing 600-700 workers, according to a Ministry of Industry estimate. Coal is Indonesia's most important export, but funding for coal plants is drying up and pushback against the fossil fuel is cutting demand. The government has reduced coal's share of new power plant capacity in its latest long-term electricity procurement plan (RUPTL) from 48% to only 34%.

[Sri Mulyani Indrawati and ADB discuss early retirement of Indonesia's coal-fired power plants](#)

—*The Jakarta Post*, 23 October 2021

Minister of Finance Sri Mulyani Indrawati and other senior officials have begun talks with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) about an Energy Transition Mechanism (ETM) to retire Indonesian coal-fired power plants early. The plan involves pooling funds to buy out and retire coal-fired plants early while requiring plant owners reinvest funds in green energy projects. Proceeds from operating the coal plants prior to retirement and from the projects would be used to pay back investors. "The discussion was about how we can end coal energy and, at the same time, ensure there are funds to take over coal [power plant] contracts," Minister Sri Mulyani explained. "We should not only design this transition technically and technocratically, but also consider the political economics." At present, domestic power plants account for about 24% of Indonesia's economically important and political-connected coal-mining industry. Coordinating Minister of Maritime Affairs and Investment Luhut Pandjaitan said on 20 September that President Joko Widodo had instructed the cabinet to work on realizing the ETM.

[Opportunities for climate-smart development in Indonesia](#)

—Erina Mursanti and Fabby Tumiwa, *climateworksfoundation*, 30 September 2021

Indonesia is one of the top ten greenhouse gas (GFG) emitting countries globally, the largest economy in Southeast Asia, and a key country for deep decarbonization strategies to meet the mid-century goals of

the Paris Agreement. While Indonesia is not on track to reduce GHG emissions in line with the Paris Agreement goals, there are opportunities for the country to enhance its climate ambition and avoid locking itself into a high-carbon development pathway with environmental degradation, stranded assets, and deadly air pollution. With 81,000 km of coastline, Indonesia is vulnerable to sea-level rise and saltwater intrusion, which may impact water availability and agriculture. Five actions Indonesia could take are: (1) Decarbonize land transport; (2) Enable low-carbon industry by shifting out of extractive industries such as crude palm oil and coal production; (3) Scale social forestry to reduce illegal logging and protect carbon stocks; (4) Promote energy-efficient buildings and appliances; and (5) Ensure quality electricity access by replacing diesel generators with distributed renewable energy.

[Indonesia's new carbon tax signals higher power costs amid calls for clarity](#)

—Fathin Ungku and Bernadette Christina, Reuters, 8 October 2021

Indonesia will be the fourth Asian country to introduce a carbon tax, but opposition is expected from industries that warn higher power costs that could undermine manufacturing competitiveness. The tax is part of a overhaul which also includes raising value-added taxes (VAT) and cancelling a planned corporate tax cut. The tax will be introduced at Rp 30 (US\$0.0021) per kg of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e)—less than half the Rp 75 rate originally proposed—and imposed at the floor rate on coal-fired power plants from April 2022 while a carbon trade mechanism is established. The mechanism is expected to be in operation by 2025. The new carbon tax is part of a plan to slash carbon output and bring forward the goal net zero emissions from 2070 to 2060 or sooner. The tax has been welcomed by most observers, but industry analysts have questioned the logic of taxing carbon emitted by utilities while at the same time subsidizing the fossil-fuel based electricity they produce.

[Cop-26: Latest national climate plans still fall far short, UN report warns](#)

—Brad Plumer, *The New York Times*, 26 October 2021

The latest national climate plans to tackle climate change over the next decade fall far short of what is needed to avert a dangerous rise in global temperatures, according to a UN Report. In the runup to the Cop-26 climate summit in Glasgow, a number of countries have updated their emissions reductions pledges, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), including Argentina, the UK, Canada, the EU, South Africa, and the US. But the new pledges would produce barely 14% of the additional emissions cuts needed to help limit global warming to 1.5° C above preindustrial levels, the threshold beyond which the dangers of global warming grow immensely. Even if all countries achieve their promises, the world would be on track to warm by 2.7° C by 2100, an outcome UN Secretary General António Guterres described as “catastrophic”. Major emitters including India, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia have not submitted new pledges as yet, while some updated pledges [such as those from Russia, Australia, and Indonesia] are unlikely to lead to actual emissions reductions between now and 2030.

Report: UN Environment Programme, [*Emissions Gap Report 2021: The Heat is On*](#), 26 October 2021.

[Cop-26: The rich world's promise of US\\$100 billion in annual climate aid inches forward](#)

—Somini Sengupta, *The New York Times*, 25 October 2021

The upshot of new efforts to shore up the US\$100 billion a year that rich industrialized countries were supposed to raise to help poor countries address climate change is that the funds that were supposed to be on the table last year will most likely be there next year, or perhaps the year after that. Diplomats from Canada and Germany stated they expect “significant progress toward the US\$100 billion annual goal in 2022 and express confidence it would be met in 2023.” The funding gap has been a widening fault line in climate diplomacy, with some poor and middle-income countries arguing they should not be expected to slow emissions of greenhouse gases if rich countries cannot keep their US\$100 billion promise. In reality, US\$100 billion a year is nowhere sufficient to cover the costs of adapting to the damages caused by climate disruptions, let alone pivoting the energy systems of poor countries away from fossil fuels. Exactly how to make up the shortfalls for 2020 and 2021 remains unclear.

E. Pollution and Waste Management

[Indonesia's pandemic-fuelled problem: mounds of medical waste](#)

—Adi Renaldi, *Aljazeera*, 1 October 2021

Burangkan, one of Indonesia's largest landfills, about 30 km from the capital, Jakarta, superficially resembles any other large dumpsite, but among the regular rubbish lies a growing volume of toxic medical waste, all hidden in plain sight. Bagong Suyoto heads the National Waste Coalition (KPNas), which advocates for better waste management in Indonesia. Since the early days of the pandemic, Suyoto has noticed the rapid increase in the amount of untreated medical wastes, including intravenous (IV) drip bags, used masks, medical gloves, and Covid-19 tests. Most of the medical waste he finds is mixed with regular waste inside plastic bags, making it difficult to trace back to its source. By law, medical waste should be incinerated or sterilized, but it is cheaper for hospitals and clinics to dispose of medical wastes this way than to pay disposal businesses to remove it. According to the UNEP, the rate of medical waste disposal has risen by 500% in Jakarta and four other Asian capitals.

Report: [Waste Management during the Covid-19 Pandemic: From Response to Recovery](#), Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, UN Environment Program, 2020.

[Choosing and consuming: Sustainability key to Indonesia's food waste problem](#)

—Josa Lukman, *The Jakarta Post*, 25 October 2021

A recent report by the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) disclosed that Indonesia threw away 23-48 million tonnes of food waste annually from 2000 to 2019, equivalent to 115-184 kg/capita each year, occurring across all states of the supply chain and consumption, including processing, storage, transportation, and consumer wastage. The food waste resulted in a loss of approximately Rp 213-551 trillion (US\$15.0 – 38.9 billion), equivalent to 4-5% of GDP. Transforming global food security to achieve Indonesia's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has become more important as the country faces a convergence of crises, according to National Development Planning Minister Suharso Monarfa, who is also head of Bappenas. One of the many issues we face concerns food loss and waste management, Suharso explained. Undernourishment and malnutrition has worsened since 2019, contributing to stunting in children. Since 2017, Garda Pangan, a food bank, has "rescued" more than 183,000 portions of food going to waste, saving about 43 tonnes of food waste and distributing meals to more than 127,000 beneficiaries.

[Indonesian activists build museum out of 10,000 items of plastic waste](#)

—Jennifer Hassan, *Washington Post*, 6 October 2021

Activists in Indonesia worried about plastic pollution wanted people to rethink their usage. So they built a museum made from more than 10,000 discarded bottles, bags, straws and single-use food packaging. The massive haul of items was fished out of local rivers and beaches that have become a dumping ground for such items, posing a significant threat to marine life, ecosystems and communities around the world. The museum, which opened last month in the town of Gresik in East Java province, features thousands of plastic bottles which dangle overhead as visitors pass through the site, highlighting the sprawling impact of the marine crisis. While it is difficult to calculate precisely how much plastic has ended up in the world's oceans, scientists have estimated that the annual total could be as high as 12.7 million metric tonnes, according to an item in the journal *Science*.

[Solving Bali's Rivers of Trash](#)

—Theodora Sutcliffe, *Hakai Magazine*, 12 October 2021

Gary Benchehib's organization, Sungai Watch, has now installed 100 barriers on Bali's rivers to trap waste before it reaches the ocean. Between November 2019 and July 2021, the barriers intercepted 650 tonnes of waste. Since then, the team has expanded rapidly, and now has 40 employees, all paid above the legal minimum wage for the area. Five dedicated teams make daily rounds of the barriers to remove

the waste. Sungai Watch barriers allow fish to pass through and can withstand rainy season floods that could raise the height of a river by three meters or more. For wider, deeper rivers, the team repurposes second-hand 19-liter plastic water drums to create a floating platform that collectors can walk along. At their headquarters, down a sleepy road surrounded by rice fields, not far from the surfing beaches of Canggu, Sungai Watch employees process around two tonnes of river trash each day.

[Turning the Tide: How can Indonesia close the loop on plastic waste](#)

—Eli J. Patton and Hazel Ruyi Li (Managing Editors), *The Wilson Center*, April 2021

With only 12% of single-use plastics recycled, Indonesia is now the second biggest source of ocean plastic after China, responsible for 10% of global plastic leakage. The paper gathers diverse voices told by Indonesian, Japanese and American authors describing the challenges and successes of Indonesia's battle to reduce plastic waste, including new partnerships, policy innovation, financing and community engagement.

Report: Jennifer L. Turner (Senior Editor) [Turning the Tide: How can Indonesia close the loop on plastic waste](#), The Wilson Center, China Environment Forum and IDE-JETRO (April 2020)

F. Conservation and Protected Areas

['Just skin and bones': Bali Elephants left to starve](#)

—Al Jazeera Staff, *Aljazeera*, 7 October 2021

An elephant park in Bali left more than twelve elephants to starve and staff without pay after plummeting ticket sales forced it to close after Covid-19 spread around the world and borders were closed. Bali Elephant Camp (BEC), a safari-style recreational park 30 minutes' drive north of Ubud offered a range of nature-oriented activities like bike-riding through rice fields and white-water rafting. In 2005, BEC joined a Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) wildlife conservation Program that entrusted privately-owned zoos and safari parks with the care of critically-endangered Sumatran elephants. In exchange for providing the animals a home, accredited park and zoos were permitted to sell elephant tourism services that were wildly profitable before the pandemic. "The impact of Covid-10 on small companies like BEC has been especially severe," said Agus Budi Santosa, director of Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam Bali (BKSDA), the government body overseeing the parks and zoos that adopted Sumatran elephants. Now the government has seized the elephants, which have been relocated to a new zoo in Tabanan and another zoo on Java.

[Protecting Forests of Papua and Maluku is not just about preserving Birds-of-Paradise](#)

—V. Arnila Wulandani, *EcoNusa*, 9 October 2021

Indonesia's largest tropical rainforests are located in Tanah Papua (Papua and West Papua provinces) and the Maluku Islands. More than 3,000 vertebrate and over 200,000 invertebrate species live in these forests. Papua also has more than 13,000 vascular plants, more than any other location in the world. The beautiful Birds-of-Paradise would not be able to live without plants, said Charlie Heatubun, Head of West Papua's Research and development Agency. Although natural forest cover remains high, the degree of forest loss in Papua and Maluku over the last 20 years is clearly visible, according to ornithologist Ed Scholes, who together with photographer Tim Laman spent eight years documenting Papua's Birds-of-Paradise. Tropical rainforests in Papua and Maluku now face the greatest threats they have seen. 130 companies now hold oil palm plantation concessions and timber forest products permits in Tanah Papua, with total concession areas totalling 7 million ha spread across 20 districts. Rainforests are also under pressure from road construction to open access for transportation and development of remote areas.

G. Other

[Indigenous group faces eviction from traditional lands for 'New Bali' tourism project in Sumatra](#)

—Tonggo Simangunsong, *Mongabay*, 25 October 2021

The volcanic crater lake of Toba in North Sumatra province, touted by the government as a new tourism hub, is the traditional home of the indigenous Pomparan Ompu Ondol Butarbutar, a group now facing eviction from their homes and who have seen their farms razed to make way for a tourism resort. The group is filing lawsuits to fight eviction from what it considers its ancestral homeland, but its customary land rights claim is not recognized by the government. The Pomparan Ompu Ondol Butarbutar claim they have inhabited the area for the past 200 years, but now are in conflict with the Lake Tobar Tourism Authority, the government entity managing the tourism project. Lacking formal recognition of their claims, the Pomparan Ompu Ondol Butarbutar are legally considered squatters on state lands, without recourse when officials earmark their territory for development.

[Indigenous Papuans won back their forest from a palm oil firm, but still lack title to their land](#)

—Hans Michael Jong, *Mongabay*, 27 October 2021

For years, indigenous residents of Segun Village in Sorong District, West Papua Province, have resisted the arrival of the palm oil industry into their territory, yet still saw their land signed away by the government for an oil palm concession. Earlier this year, the Sorong district government revoked the concession, citing a litany of violations by PT Sorong Agro SawitIndo (SAS), the concession holder, including failure to obtain a right-to-cultivate permit. But despite revoking the SAS concession, the villagers' rights to their ancestral forest has not been recognized. In fact, so far no ancestral forests in Papua and West Papua provinces have been recognize as such by the national government, and the process to gain such legal recognition is costly and time-consuming.*

Sorong District Head Johny Kamuru says the government began mapping indigenous territories in the area in 2018, following enactment in 2017 of a local regulation (*perda*) which serves as the basis for acknowledging indigenous rights. Once the maps of indigenous territories have been drawn up, the local government can issue a decree formally recognizing the indigenous status of the community, which would then be submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) to serve as the basis for a ministerial decree recognizing the rights of the community to their ancestral forests under the customer forest scheme, a long and arduous process.

As of July 2021, the KLHK had granted titled to only 80 communities for just 49,442 ha of land, 0.56% of the 10.56 million ha of customary forest across Indonesia that have been independently mapped by 833 indigenous communities and submitted to the ministry in 2019. No customary forest titles have been granted in the provinces of West Papua and Papua, despite the fact that indigenous communities across the Papuan provinces have mapped their territories. "To date, no verification team has been sent by the ministry to declare the customary forests," said Suroso, an advisor to Johny Kamuru, who argues that the Special Autonomy Law for the Papuan provinces granted should allow local governments to declare customary forests for indigenous communities.

"The special autonomy law shouldn't be seen only as a law that facilitates the disbursement of money [from the national government to local governments]," Johny Kamuru says, adding that this "will become a ticking time bomb" if it fails to protect indigenous peoples in these provinces. "And at some point, it will explode."

* **Note:** Moves toward legal recognition of indigenous people's ancestral land rights are among the effects of a 2012 ruling by Indonesia's Constitutional Court (No. 35/PUU-X/2012) declaring that the customary forests of indigenous peoples should not be classified as part of State Forest Areas but instead should be returned to the original owners. <https://www.forestpeoples.org/en/topics/rights-land-natural-resources/news/2013/05/constitutional-court-ruling-restores-indigenous-pe>

[Have Sumatran fishing crews found the fabled Srivijaya Empire Island of Gold?](#)

—Dalya Alberge, *The Guardian*, 22 October 2021

The Srivijaya was a Malay Buddhist thalassocratic empire based on the island of Sumatra and centre for the expansion of Buddhism from the 7th to the 12th centuries CE, then was largely forgotten after it fell to the Javanese Singhasari and Majapahit empires in the 13th century; its history, actual location and even its existence open to question. At its height, the Srivijaya Empire mastered the arteries of the ancient Maritime Silk Road, a colossal market in which local, Chinese and Arab goods were traded, according to

Dr. Sean Kingsley, a British maritime archaeologist. For over 300 years, the rulers of Srivijaya controlled the trade routes between the Middle East and Imperial China, becoming the crossroads for the finest produce of the age. Now local fishing crews carrying out night-time dives on the Musi River near Palembang have discovered extraordinary catches of gold coins, jewelry and other objects and statues studded with precious gems. Research by Dr. Kingsley and others has been published in the current edition of *Wreckwatch magazine* part of an autumn issue focusing on China and the maritime Silk Road.

Special Issue, [China and Maritime Silk Roads](#), *Wreckwatch*, (Autumn 2021)

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