

## Group rallies for conservation

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**Alvin Darlanika Soedarjo**, The Jakarta Post, Jakarta

A leading environmental group asked the government Sunday to temporarily halt logging operations in the country, insisting that if measures are not taken to curb logging activities, Indonesia's forests could be gone within 15 years.

Indonesian Forum for the Environment (Walhi) chairman Chalid Muhammad said the government should formulate new policies to extinguish forests fires, reduce the haze and halt the conversion of peatland.

"We demand that the government enacts a moratorium on logging and restores (Indonesia's) forests within the next 15 years before depletion becomes unstoppable," Chalid told *The Jakarta Post*.

The restoration effort should be interdepartmental, involve local communities and be written into national policy, he said.

"The government should stop the exportation of logs and count how many logs Indonesia needs for the industry. There should also be incentives, such as tax incentives, for those importing logs," Chalid said.

About 400 Walhi demonstrators staged a rally near the Hotel Indonesia traffic circle in Central Jakarta on Sunday morning, calling for the cessation of logging activities.

Chalid said that over the last decade, Indonesia had assumed a place among the world's leading forest destroyers.

In 2004, 3.4 million hectares of forest were cleared, compared with 2.8 million ha in 2005 and 2.7 million ha in 2006.

"The figure is getting smaller over the years not because there have been effective laws or policies, but because the forest itself is diminishing," Chalid said.

Walhi predicts that if effective measures are not taken by the government to curb logging activities, forests in Sumatra will be gone within five years, while those in Kalimantan will be gone within 10 years and those in Papua within 15 years.

The group also estimates that by 2022, all forests in Indonesia, a country already under threat from serious ecological damage, could become history.

"Internationally, Indonesia is the world's third largest contributor of carbon emissions due to forest haze and peatland conversions for industry, such as for palm oil plantations," he said.

While calling for immediate action from the government, a number of environmental

groups and companies also expressed their commitment to forest conservation activities in the country.

Accor Group Indonesia, state-owned forest management company Perum Perhutani and community forest group Karya Lestari pledged Sunday to create more green space in the country.

Under the supervision of the Center for International Forestry Research (Cifor) and the Centre de Cooperation Internationale en Research Agronomie pour le Developpement (Cirad), the group aims to plant 74,120 *sengon* trees (*Paraserienthes faicataria*) and *jatropha* plants in Indonesia.

Sengon trees are considered easily cultivatable and can be harvested after only five years for logging purposes, while *jatrophas* can be used as an alternate source of energy, or biofuel.

The group will plant the trees on 43.2 ha of land owned by Perum Perhutani in the village of Glandang in Pemasang, Central Java.

"Our mission is to protect our land and support global goals through realistic efforts. Local communities are also involved in forest management and restoration," said Accor Indonesia president director Gerard Guillouet.

He said that environment-based education, which focuses on sustainable growth, is important for Indonesia if it is to maximize its forest protection capabilities.