Indonesia's Reduction of Deforestation: A Stepping Stone towards Environment and Forest Protection Oriented Economic Development

[Jakarta, March 11th, 2021] Yayasan Madani Berkelanjutan appreciates the work of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) to reduce deforestation by 75% in the period of 2019-2020 as stated on their press release on March 3rd, 2021. This is a solid stepping stone for Indonesia to continue building its economy without deforestation and environmental degradation. Indonesia must maintain the reduction of deforestation in the future so that other tropical forest countries could look up to Indonesia's success.

"Therefore, it is crucial for the government of Indonesia to ensure that every development policy, from the National Economic Recovery Program ("PEN"), National Strategic Program ("PSN"), to food estate and energy security, are in line with efforts to achieve Indonesia's climate commitment." said Yosi Amelia as Project Officer for Forest and Climate in Yayasan Madani Berkelanjutan in response to the MoEF press release on Indonesia's deforestation.

"However, the largest reduction of deforestation was in the loss of 'Plantation Forests,' with a whopping 99% reduction from the previous year and not in the loss of natural forests, while primary forest loss only declined 48% from 23,9 thousand hectares in the period of 2018-2019 to 12,3 thousand hectares in 2019-2020. Unfortunately, the decline in secondary forest loss is even lower, only 36% from 164 thousand hectares in 2018-2019 to 104,6 thousand hectares in 2019-2020. This shows a high urgency for Indonesia to improve its protection towards secondary forest, both that are already given to concessions and that are not yet protected by the policy to halt new permits or "PIPPIB." One of the ways to do that is through policy innovations including the implementation of REDD+," said Fadli Ahmad Naufal, GIS Specialist.

Fadli also added, "If we only counted the loss of natural forest (gross natural forest deforestation), the percentage of deforestation's reduction rate worthy of appreciation is actually 38%, from 187,9 thousand hectares loss in 2018-2019 to 116,9 thousand hectares loss in 2019-2020. According to Madani's initial research, there are 9,4 million hectares natural forest or 16 times the island of Bali that have not been licensed out and outside PIPPIB and social forestry allocation - PIAPS are not under protection of any policy to halt new licenses and therefore susceptible to deforestation."

On the other hand, the Indonesian government has formulated new policies which present high risks to increase deforestation in the next few years. Without strengthening environmental safeguards, it is feared that these recent development programs may jeopardize Indonesia's climate commitment and low carbon development program; and worse, intensify conflicts with indigenous and local communities.

The country faces a risk of imminent increase in deforestation within an extensive area of natural forests - around 1,5 million hectares or almost 3 times the island of Bali - are included in Area of Interest (AOI) of Food Estate in 4 provinces of Papua, Central Kalimantan, North Sumatra, and

South Sumatra. Huge potential economic value of timber in those areas - reaching IDR 209 trillions - increases such risks.

"Therefore it is urgent for the government to strengthen the protection of secondary natural forests, both already in concessions and those that are not yet protected by PIPPIB. One thing that can be done is through the implementation of REDD+ with the implementation of strong environmental and social safeguards supported by data transparency", said Yosi.

Yosi also added that Madani would be at the forefront if the government opens up to protect Indonesia's natural forests from further deforestation.

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