



**INTERFAITH RAINFOREST INITIATIVE**

## **D E C L A R A T I O N**

### **INTERFAITH AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES FOR INDONESIA FORESTS**

Earth is a gift and a shared home for every creature and is bestowed with resources and provisions that are sufficient for all. Tropical forest ecosystems within our Earth are also created as a home for vast peatlands, which are essential for carbon sequestration, preservation of biodiversity and for balancing the global climate.

With an area of 93.95 million hectares,\* tropical forests in Indonesia provide essential habitat for millions of people, livelihoods, sources of food, medicines and clean water that supports individual life and worship activities as well as rituals of indigenous peoples. Not only an ecological entity, tropical forests are also an important element for the communal identity. They are a shared pride that must be safeguarded and protected for the survival of the planet.

We, the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) Forum, who represent religious leaders and indigenous peoples of Indonesia,\*\* alongside scientists, academics, environmental organizations and activists, and others, are hereby expressing our concern about the global state of tropical forests, especially the Indonesian rainforest which has been under perpetual damage and are partially lost.

We are aware that the main drivers in forest destruction and loss in Indonesia are unsustainable policies and development systems that are not in favor of the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities whose livelihoods are bound to the forest. The government has issued several policies and permits for large-scale conversion of the forests and land for plantation, mining, infrastructure development, logging business and has supported excessive consumption patterns.

Development policies and practices that are not socially and ecologically sustainable have caused biodiversity loss, environmental pollution, decreased quality of human life, increased poverty and social-economic inequality, injustice, corruption, various conflicts, violations of human rights and insecurity, loss of identity and local wisdom, eliminating the best opportunities to reduce the rate of climate change.

The destruction and loss of tropical forests are not in line with the teachings and principles of religion, traditional beliefs and values, as well as the state constitution, which mandate every human being to maintain the integrity of nature and social justice. We recognize the destruction and loss of tropical forests as a threat to the sustainability of human life for generations to come, so we demand immediate and decisive action.

\* Directorate of Inventory and Monitoring of Forest Resources, Directorate General of Forestry Planning and Environmental Management, Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry, "Data and Information on Thematic Mapping of Indonesian Forestry, Indonesian Land Closure, Indonesian Deforestation, Primary Natural Forest Moratorium, and Peatlands of 2018.

\*\* Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, ancestral religion and creed.

Fundamental changes are needed to the country's values, lifestyles and policies to protect tropical forests. We have a deep moral and spiritual obligation to protect Indonesia's tropical forests.

Therefore, we, the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) Forum for Indonesian Tropical Forests or IRI Indonesia, hereby state:

*We realize* that protecting tropical forests is part of a moral order that respects the integrity of God's creation, including social and economic justice, respect for human rights and human dignity, in achieving peace and equality.

*We are committed* to raising the awareness and concern of our community about preventing crises and opposing forest destruction and loss, human rights violations and justice, through fatwas / bhisama / teachings / pastoral policies / calls to advance religious understanding and education as well as beliefs and customs, by reflecting on ecological morals and spirituality to protect tropical forests and respect human rights.

*We are ready* to mobilize our community, from the grassroots to the highest leadership level, to work together with governments, civil society groups and organizations, the private sector, and UN partners who have worked to protect forests. We are ready to provide inputs and encourage the creation of regulatory improvements that produce a system that will not allow opportunities for tropical forest damage.

*We urge* the government to strengthen and fulfill commitments to protect forests and the rights of indigenous peoples throughout the archipelago, through new regulations and / or policies, dialogue and actions to stop granting permits, evaluate and limit unfair tenure and ownership of land, to perform environmental rehabilitation and restoration, law enforcement and conflict resolution, protecting and restoring the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities who are victims of forest products exploitation and human rights violations.

*We stand together* in solidarity with indigenous peoples and anyone who protects and conserves forests, to get protection from threats of intimidation and violence. We will always side with those who defend the sustainability of tropical forests and their ecosystems.

*We urge* the government and the international community to place forest protection, empowerment and community capacity building as core efforts to achieve the goals of the Paris climate agreement. We will stay vigilant until these efforts have been realized.

*We urge* the private sector, large-scale plantation extractive industries, industrial plantations, logging and mining businesses, to be responsible for restoring and protecting tropical forest ecosystems, to protect and respect community rights, and to divest out of businesses that benefit from the destruction of tropical forests.

*We realize* that efforts to restore and protect tropical forests in Indonesia are not easy. However, with noble intentions, solidarity, constructive dialogue, perseverance and shared goals, we believe that the condition of tropical forests in Indonesia can be sustained and provide sustainable benefits for generations to come.

**Jakarta, 31 January 2020**

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