

Saving Sumatra: Indonesia reaches historic agreement

October 9 2008

The Indonesian government and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) today announced a bold commitment to protect the remaining forests and critical ecosystems of Sumatra, an Indonesian island that holds some of the world's most diverse – and endangered – forests. The historic agreement represents the first-ever island-wide commitment to protect Sumatra's stunning biodiversity.

The commitment has been endorsed by governors of all provinces across Sumatra, the world's sixth-largest island, and was also endorsed by four Ministers. Sumatra is the only place on Earth where tigers, elephants, orangutans and rhinos co-exist. One forest on the island, Tesso Nilo, has the greatest vascular plant diversity of any lowland forest ever studied – with more than twice the plant species in the Amazon.

"This agreement commits all the Governors of Sumatra's 10 provinces, along with the Indonesian Ministries of Forestry, Environment, Interior and Public Works, to restore critical ecosystems in Sumatra and protect areas with high conservation values," said Hermien Roosita, Deputy Minister of Environment. "The Governors will now work together to develop ecosystem-based spatial plans that will serve as the basis for future development on the island."

WWF and other conservation groups working in Sumatra will help implement the political commitment to protect what remains of the island's species-rich forests and critical areas. The island has lost 48 percent of its natural forest cover since 1985. "This commitment is

monumental and offers real hope for Sumatra's majestic tropical forests, which harbor some of the world's rarest species and provide livelihoods for millions of people," said Tom Dillon, WWF's Vice President for Field Programs. "WWF will work with Indonesia's Government to make this bold agreement a reality on the ground."

More than 13 percent of Sumatra's remaining forests are peat forests, which sit atop the deepest peat soil in the world; clearing these forests is a major source of carbon emissions that cause climate change. "By protecting these forests from deforestation, Sumatra will provide a significant contribution to mitigate global climate change," said Marlis Rahman, Vice Governor of West Sumatra Province. "We are calling international communities to support us in implementing the commitment on the ground."

"There are a lot of challenges in the future to ensure the successful implementation of the commitment," said Noor Hidayat, Director of Conservation Areas at the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry. "A broad-based effort involving local and national government officials, financial institutions, NGOs, and communities needs to work together to make this commitment a reality."

Source: World Wildlife Fund

Citation: Saving Sumatra: Indonesia reaches historic agreement (2008, October 9) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2008-10-sumatra-indonesia-historic-agreement.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.