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1
2 The recent Greenpeace book on “Protection Money” exposes the scandalous nature of
3 Indonesia’s carbon accounting for its promised REDD+ initiatives and its Second National
4 Communication to the Climate Convention. There is plenty of good advice for the Norwegian
5 government in seeing that its May 2010 commitment of US\$1 billion for avoiding
6 deforestation in Indonesia has the promised benefits for climate and for biodiversity and local
7 people. Some of the advice would also apply to Brazil, where Norway has made a similar
8 US\$1 billion pledge, but much of it is specific to Indonesia, where oil palm and silvicultural
9 plantations (rather than low-value cattle pastures) replace tropical forest, and where large
10 areas of forest are on peatlands where carbon emissions are astronomical when cleared.
11 Indonesia is also a place where transparency is still a distant hypothesis that presents no
12 impediment to officials when divulging their statistics, whereas Brazil has made significant
13 advances in this area despite having room for improvement.
14

15 Indonesia claims that all carbon sequestered by the growth of its pulp plantations is a
16 carbon benefit, ignoring the emission when the paper products are burned or decay soon after
17 they are produced. It is “*déjà vu* all over again” from my own debates on Brazilian carbon
18 claims for massive plantations proposed over 20 years ago. The fallacious nature of Indonesia
19 ignoring initial biomass when claiming benefits for oil palm plantations should be
20 remembered in Brazil when assessing recently announced plans for oil palm expansion in
21 Amazonia. Indonesia’s Orwellian manipulation of language to recast replacing logged-over
22 (but still biodiverse) forest with plantations as “rehabilitation of degraded lands” for carbon
23 benefits should be condemned anywhere.
24

25 The Greenpeace report argues that Indonesia could meet its targets for pulp and palm
26 oil production without any further loss of forest (including “degraded” forest) by investing in
27 raising the per-hectare productivity of pulpwood and oil palm plantations in areas that have
28 already been cleared. The plan assumes the truth of statements by government and industry
29 officials as to the yield increases they can achieve. It should be mentioned that statements by
30 these sources quoted in the Greenpeace report, including those on estimates of current yields,
31 do not inspire confidence in a scenario of such dramatic increases materializing in reality. In
32 fact, the methodology section of the report notes that “Greenpeace has chosen to use
33 government or industry data rather than seeking alternative – perhaps more scientifically up-
34 to-date – data sources” (p. 54). This certainly leaves room to believe that the Greenpeace
35 authors themselves suspect the veracity of the yield increase scenario. Nevertheless, it is true
36 that increasing per-hectare yield should be the channel for investment – not expansion of
37 planted areas.
38

39 What stands out as missing in the Greenpeace report is any questioning of the
40 Indonesian government’s plans for increasing production of pulp and palm oil over the
41 coming decades: tripling pulp and paper output by 2025 and doubling palm oil production by
42 2020. Instead, Greenpeace simply hustles to show that these amazing targets can be met
43 without any deforestation. These targets are simply pronouncements of government officials
44 and can be changed at any time at the stroke of a pen. I would suggest that Indonesian
45 authorities should reduce their targets to more realistic levels as part of their plan for a “new
46 development pathway”. The targets should be set based on what can reasonably be obtained
47 without any further deforestation or peatland conversion. Excluding forest and peatland
48 represents a limit or “boundary condition” – not simply a desideratum that everyone wants,
49 but only if absurdly high increases in total production can be obtained. The current

50 deforestation “moratorium”, indefinitely extended and with “forest” properly defined, is the
51 constraint to which production must adjust – not the other way around.

52

53 It should be remembered that government targets for production increases can be
54 changed at will in either direction. If the Greenpeace plan were to show signs of successfully
55 achieving the amazing tripling of pulp and paper production, for example, the government
56 could always simply up the ante and declare that now they want a four, five or six-fold
57 increase instead – or else cut the forest. The basic problem that Greenpeace needs to
58 recognize, as does the government of Indonesia, is that there are real limits on how much can
59 be produced. Those limits need to be realistically assessed and respected, with maintenance
60 of the remaining forests and peatlands as a precondition.