

EXPLORING

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PART TWO: Indonesia Set to Become Global Environmental Leader

Join us as we visit Asia and explore the human impact on the environment. This five-part series runs Wednesdays through May 12.

This article was written by:

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Last September, at the environment and climate change session of the G20 Summit in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S. President Barack Obama invited Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to give the keynote address — and Indonesia took the stage as a global environmental leader. Indonesia was also the site of two recent conferences held to stimulate international action on the topic of climate change.

Meeting in Bali

In December 2007, delegates from more than 80 countries met in Bali to develop the "Bali Road Map," a set of guidelines to stabilize greenhouse-gas concentrations in the atmosphere and prevent anthropogenic changes (those caused by humans) to the global climate. You may have heard of Bali — an island in Indonesia best known for surfing and a vibrant artistic culture.

One of the main points of disagreement between the 80 countries that met in Bali was whether developing countries should have to limit their greenhouse-gas emissions or whether the world's richer nations — the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases — should take greater responsibility for the problem.

The United States wanted limits set on the developing world's emissions. The forum erupted in boos! The delegate from Papua New Guinea asked the



Fish catch in Indonesia. (Photo: Celia Lowe)

United States to either lead on the issue of climate change or get out of the way. Speeches by Indonesian President Yudhoyono and United Nations Secretary Ban Ki-Moon exhorted the assembly to reach an agreement, and at the last minute, the United States shifted its position. The final agreement contains provisions to help the world's poorer nations adapt to climate change and to preserve tropical rain-forest environments, which absorb atmospheric carbon.

Indonesia, the world's largest maritime nation, has more than 17,000 islands, but the nation's size depends on the state of the tide: at high tide, some of these islands get covered up. Imagine what will happen to Indonesia's coastline as climate change causes sea levels to rise due to melting polar ice. Indonesia, like other island nations, stands to lose much of its territory (some island nations might disappear altogether).

The Fate of Our Oceans

Indonesia's relationship with the sea made it the logical site for the World Oceans Conference (WOC), held in Manado on the island of Sulawesi in May 2009. A ministerial conference involving more than 70 nations, the WOC addressed the fate of the world's oceans due to climate change. The WOC expressed concern over loss of marine biodiversity, land- and sea-based pollution of marine ecosystems, unsustainable use of marine resources, and the effects of rising sea levels, increased water temperatures, ocean acidification and changing weather patterns on the world's oceans. All of these changes can affect global food security and human well-being.

More than 100 million people are dependent on the oceans in Indonesia and five of its immediate neighbors. This area, called the "Coral Triangle," has been nicknamed the "Amazon

of the seas" by biologists, who have found the world's highest levels of marine biodiversity there. Indonesian President Yudhoyono and presidents of the other Coral Triangle countries (East Timor, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Malaysia and the Solomon Islands) held a separate meeting at the WOC to discuss expanding marine sanctuaries and no-fishing zones around the region.

Indonesian scientists and environmentalists also are leading the way to a greener future, working to find ways to use Indonesia's abundant wood biomass to sustainably produce bioenergy. Woody biomass can be used to produce methanol, a green transportation fuel. These biofuels would help alleviate the trade-off between economic growth in the developing world and the global reduction of atmospheric carbon.

As we work to solve climate change and other environmental problems, it is good to have Indonesia leading the way.

Comprehension questions:

- 1) What is the Bali Road Map?
- 2) Explain the main point of disagreement between the countries that met in Bali.
- 3) How is Indonesia leading the way in addressing climate change?

Next week:

The Shrinking of a Sea



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