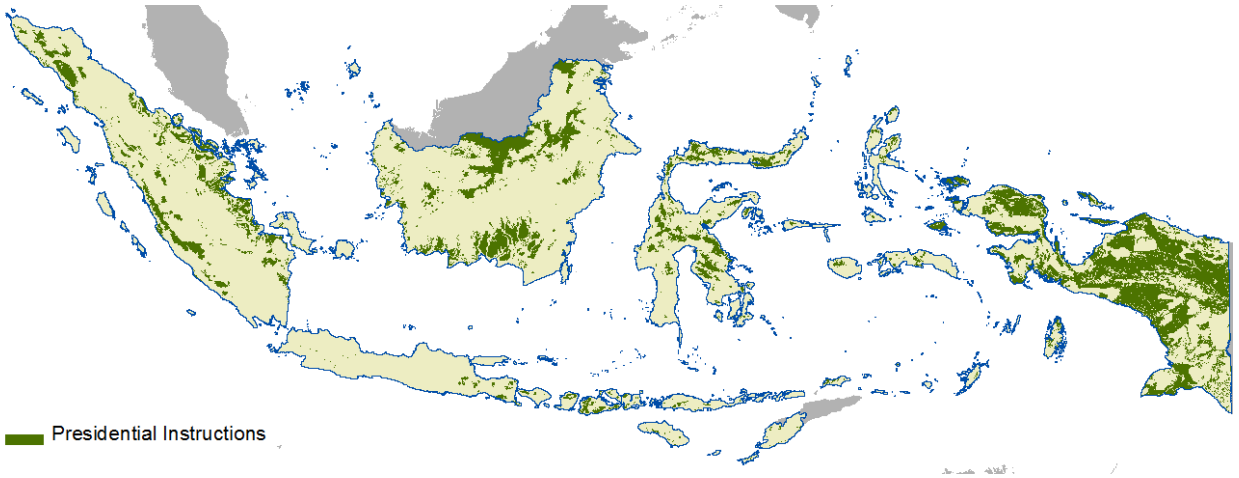
Indonesia's Moratorium on New Forest Concessions: a review

Union of Concerned Scientists, Greenpeace and World Resources Institute

Indonesia has announced a bold goal for its mitigation activities: to reduce GHG emissions by 26% or more by 2020. Its two-year moratorium on new concessions for the conversion of primary forests and peat lands could be an important step towards achieving this goal. This study examines the Presidential Instruction that established the moratorium and quantifies the coverage, exemptions, enforcement and additionality of the moratorium.

Moratorium map



Summary of Results

Previous Protection: The Presidential Instruction (moratorium) on the suspension of new concessions affords significant additional protection to Indonesia's peat lands, especially those <3m deep. The suspension on issuing new concessions applies to 42.5 million hectares of primary forests and peat lands. However, once existing protection mechanisms are taken into account (e.g. legal conservation status, steep slopes and peat >3m deep), the moratorium affords additional protection to approximately 13.7 Mha (13%) of Indonesia's primary forest and peat lands. These lands contain 16% of Indonesia's biomass and peat carbon. **Exemptions**: Since this moratorium only applies to new concessions, the existing 12.5 million ha already under concession are exempted from it. **Exclusions**: Secondary forest, which can have high carbon content and ecosystem values are excluded and are not protected under this moratorium. **Encroachments:** Recent research finds that there have been clearings in primary forests subject to the moratorium in the first four months of its establishment.

Area and Carbon Stocks on Indonesia's Peat Lands and Forests [1]

	Area (Mha)*	**%**	**Carbon (PgC)****	**%**
Total forest and peat lands	**103.6**	***100***	**42.6**	***100***
Exclusions: secondary forests without peat	48.7	*47*	8.2	*19*
Exemptions: land within concessions	12.4	*12*	11.7	*27*
Subtotal subject to the moratorium	**42.5**	***41***	**22.7**	***53***
Previous protection: steep slope, peat >3m deep or legal conservation status	28.8	*28*	16.0	*38*
Subtotal additional protection provided by the moratorium	13.7	*13*	6.7	*16*

*1 Mha = 1 million hectares **1 PgC = 1 Petagram (1000 million metric tonnes) carbon

[1] Full details of the areas, biomass carbon and peat carbon subject to the Presidential Instruction and/or depicted on the Indicative Moratorium Maps are provided in a Technical Report available at www.ucsusa.org/forests

Lessons Learned and Next Steps

While the moratorium affords significant new protection to peat lands, in its current form it is unlikely to meet the President's ambitious national targets for reducing emissions. Most of the primary forests covered by the moratorium are already legally protected; the remainder are largely inaccessible and not under immediate threat of development. Meanwhile, significant areas of high-carbon forest are not covered by the moratorium, as they are secondary forests, or primary forests and peat lands in designated concessions. Extending the Presidential Instruction's formal coverage to secondary forests, and reviewing, revoking or relocating existing concessions on forests and peat lands would greatly enhance the effectiveness of the moratorium.

The moratorium, with these changes, would present a promising opportunity to set the country on a path towards low carbon development. The next steps that the Indonesian government takes will be critical to achieving the country's development goals in a manner that is consistent with their emission reduction pledge. The following improvements should be considered:

Data Transparency-- Additional data transparency will be necessary to enable various stakeholders to determine whether the Instruction is being met. Capacity building for spatial analysis in the government is needed so that information can be shared, maintained and continuously improved. Technically sound, legally accurate and up-to-date spatial data, including up-to-date concession and permit information, should be made publicly available.

Monitoring and Enforcement-- Though rare, forest disturbance within the area subject to the moratorium has continued (observed by remote sensing and ground truthed at 20 sites). Monitoring and enforcement will need to improve if the potential benefits of the moratorium are to be realized.

Governance Reform-- The full implementation of governance improvements called for by the Presidential Instruction is vital if the root causes of Indonesia's forest loss are to be addressed. While the enactment of the moratorium does not guarantee the achievement of governance reforms, it does include some promising instructions to agencies regarding improving governance. Whether the moratorium has long term positive impacts depends on what the Indonesian government—with the participation of industry and civil society—accomplishes within the time that remains in the two-year period.

Climate Compatible Development-- The moratorium can make a positive contribution to Indonesia's goal of 7% annual economic growth. It creates incentives for increased productivity and the use of low carbon degraded land, rather than forests or peat lands, as a viable alternative for agricultural and forestry expansion. Any agricultural and forestry expansion should be confined to those deforested, non-peat lands that are low in carbon and biodiversity values, and implemented in a manner that fully respects the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Increased productivity and more efficient use of degraded land will minimize social conflict and de-couple agricultural expansion from deforestation, contributing to Indonesia's dual goals of emission reductions and economic growth.

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