

***Nani Afrida, The Jakarta Post, Jakarta | Sat, 10/01/2011 8:00 AM***

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said Friday that Indonesia was still facing many hurdles in carrying out its climate change agenda, including what he said was “poor coordination” among government officials, businessmen and civil society.

“The [climate change] program is not only a national agenda, but an international one as well. We should be able to address the problem with a better solution. We don’t want to lose this because [to do so would mean] we cannot achieve the higher agenda,” the President said during a meeting with representatives from the National Council of Climate Change (DNPI) and several ministers at the Presidential Palace in Jakarta.

He said there was a serious problem in coordination and synergy between officials in central government and their local counterparts, and between businessmen and civil society groups, in furthering the nation’s climate agenda, which is to reduce emissions by a minimum of 26 percent by the year 2020.

“If we find different points of view among policy makers, central government, local government and civil society organizations, let us return to our vision and basic policies relating to climate change,”

According to the President, Indonesia is trying to achieve prosperity and eradicate poverty but without destroying the environment. “I hope the council will be vigilant on this, to ensure all the policies are appropriate in boosting the economy and creating jobs, but it should be done without ignoring our environment,” he said.

DNPI chairman Rahmad Witoelar refused to add further comments to the President’s criticism.

“I see it in general terms. But it is important to maintain coordination between central and local government, as well as ministers.”

Forestry Minister Zulkifli Hasan acknowledged that coordination is one of the biggest challenges the country faces in meeting its emission targets.

“It requires good coordination between regions, districts and provinces, so that everyone has a similar understanding that emission reduction is our duty,” he said.

On Friday, the President held a coordinating meeting with the DNPI and his ministers to

discuss the national program to reduce gas emissions and the REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation, and forest degradation plus carbon stock enhancement) strategy.

Indonesia is trying to tap the financial benefits from the REDD+ scheme, which offers financial incentives for developing countries to reduce deforestation-related emissions and invest in low-carbon and long-term forest management.

Last week, a task force set up by the President on REDD+ signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Central Kalimantan administration to begin a pilot project on the implementation of emission reductions in the province.

The pilot project will be the first in a series of forest protection programs initiated after Indonesia sealed a US\$1 billion deal with the Norwegian government in May 2010 in return for a two-year moratorium on deforestation.

The country is the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases globally with almost 80 percent of the country's current emissions stemming from deforestation and forest degradation.

The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) recorded that Indonesia is losing about 1.1 million hectares of forest each year, most of which is due to unsustainable logging for the conversion of forests into oil palm plantations, and the pulp and paper industry.

It is also partly due to large-scale illegal logging, which is estimated to cost Indonesia about US\$4 billion annually.