

PRESS RELEASE

UNODC Executive Director: To save the orangutan, we must break the links between illegal timber trade, corruption and transnational organized crime

Up to 40% of East Asia and Pacific's wood-based exports may be illegal, UNODC head estimates

Palangkaraya (Indonesia), 9 December 2012 – Environmental crimes – often financed and organized by transnational organized criminal groups – are destroying habitats and endangering species around the world, said Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Noting UNODC estimates that up to 40 per cent of wood-products exported from East Asia and the Pacific may be produced from illegally harvested wood, Mr. Fedotov urged policy makers to consider environmental crimes a serious form of transnational organized crime and called on them to endorse 'radical changes', good governance and the strong involvement of the criminal justice system to save endangered species, communities and habitats.

"It is estimated that only 50,000 orangutans remain in the wild. The fate of the orangutan is tied to Indonesia forests," said Mr. Fedotov. "Each year, Indonesia loses 1.6 - 2.8 million hectares of forests annually. This is equivalent to losing 4 - 7 football pitches per minute. To save endangered species like the orangutan, we must stop the illegal timber trade and save the forests of Indonesia."

The orangutan is an emblematic animal representing vulnerability to deforestation. Because orangutans always stick close to the place where they were born, when they start to migrate, the message: their habitat is under severe stress. Most of the orangutans which have come under the care of provincial authorities have been displaced by the destruction of their forest homes through illegal logging as well as land clearances for the expansion of palm oil plantations.

"Today the story of the illegal timber trade is a story of violence, killings, corruption and money-laundering," said Mr. Yury Fedotov speaking in Indonesia's Central Kalimantan province. "Along with good governance in the forestry sector, we need better law enforcement, prosecution effective sentencing of perpetrators to fight impunity and ensure that the white-collar masterminds of these atrocities are subjected to the appropriate penalties."

Mr. Fedotov made his comments today at a visit to Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre in Central Kalimantan to mark International Anti-Corruption Day, 9 December and to demonstrate UNODC's commitment to addressing environmental crimes and their linkages with corruption.

"Given the transnational nature of environmental crimes, it is necessary to forge partnerships to increase our reach and to speed progress," Mr. Fedotov said. "The creation of the international Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) – a collaboration that unites UNODC,

INTERPOL, the World Bank, the World Customs Organization and CITES – is just one example of the coordinated responses we need to save our planet.”

In Kalimantan, Mr. Fedotov commended the Indonesian Government’s efforts in addressing environmental crimes and reiterated UNODC’s readiness to support initiatives in the province – particularly by supporting the Governor’s initiative in having the Central Kalimantan province selected as the pilot province for the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) initiative.

Indonesia, has become one of the world’s leading countries in implementing REDD+ and the President has formally committed the country to reducing its carbon emissions by 26 per cent by the year 2020, as well as combat forest crimes. In doing so, it has received strong support from UNODC Indonesia and the Government of Norway. UNODC Indonesia forest projects currently operate in Papua, West Papua and Central Kalimantan.

The mission to Kalimantan was the last leg of Mr. Fedotov’s mission to Southeast Asia. The Indonesia leg covered three islands (Java, Sumatra and Kalimantan) in three days. This marks the conclusion of his five-country, 12-day visit to Southeast Asia where he engaged both with government counterparts and ASEAN leadership in Thailand, Myanmar, Viet Nam, Lao PDR and Indonesia.

During his tour of Southeast Asia, Mr. Fedotov discussed and engaged with stakeholders on a broad range of human security threats including illicit drugs, transnational organized crime, anti-corruption, environmental crimes including the illegal trade in timber and protected wildlife, and human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

For further information, please contact:

John **Bleho**
Media and Communications Consultant
UNODC Regional Centre for East Asia and the Pacific
Telephone: (+66) 2288.2091
Mobile: (+66) 81.750.0539
Email: john.bleho@unodc.org

Zulkarnain Lubis
Communication Associate
UNODC Indonesia
Telephone: +62-21-5292-0731
Mobile: +62812-8214-6235
Email: zulkarnain.lubis@unodc.org

David Dadge
Spokesperson, UNODC Vienna
Telephone: (+43 1) 26060-5629
Mobile: (+43-699) 1459-5629
Email: david.dadge@unvienna.org