

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT ADDRESS ON PRE-CGI MEETING

Jakarta, January 19, 2004

Excellencies,
Distinguish participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The devastating earthquake and tsunami of 26 December 2004 has claimed a death toll of more than 110,000 and at least 700,000 people are displaced from their homes in the provinces of Aceh and North Sumatra. The race to save lives and provide medical support has been the country's top priority for the last three weeks. However, in the last few days we have witnessed how the damaged environmental services in Banda Aceh have become the urgent and important challenge for the livelihood of people in the tsunami impacted areas.

Clogged drainage system from the huge amount of tsunami mud and other solid wastes, has created flood during heavy rains since last week, while polluted water supply has increased the risks of the spreading of water borne diseases. Contamination and pollution from solid and liquid waste along with a shutdown of basic

sanitary services will create the second derivation of natural catastrophe in the affected areas.

The Ministry of Environment believes that a comprehensive reconstruction program should not only be based on rebuilding infrastructure, but also by cleaning, rehabilitating and protecting the natural ecosystems.

The Ministry of Environment is currently conducting Rapid Environmental Assessment which will serve both as impact identification and as inputs for further relief efforts and reconstruction plans. The Ministry is also producing guidelines for environmental management, both for relief support activities, from cleaning up to construction of temporary settlement facilities activities, and for the activities to rehabilitate the damaged infrastructures.

In the near future, the Ministry will produce geographic information on contaminated zones and recommendations for clean-up and rehabilitation plan, including technical guidance for reconstruction activities based on this Rapid Environmental Assessment. Particularly, the cleaning and sanitizing of hazardous and infectious wastes will be sufficiently addressed.

The following operational efforts will prioritize services to the public, especially in cleaning up drinking wells and community water resources. This action will be closely followed by the rehabilitation of vital natural ecosystems, particularly the mangrove

forests in coastal areas, conservation areas, and protection greenbelts around future settlements and cities. This comes from lessons drawn that natural features like mangroves play important roles in defending coastal area from oceanic disaster. Community livelihood rebuilding then should be tailored on the principle of sustainable development based on respect on local rights and public participation.

We believe that there will be hard challenges ahead, yet we will ensure all efforts are using holistic approach and cultural sensitiveness. It is the best of scenario if the Aceh people is able to rebuild their own life based on abundant of options and freedom to choose alternatives, all protected and assisted by the government and the international community.

In the face of initiating a global early warning system for natural disaster, we believe that the system should not merely consist of disaster detection and communication system. Indonesia should provide a proper public education and aggressive information programs. This includes abilities for the local communities to spot warning signs and develop appropriate procedures on pre-disaster time-frame, which includes evacuation procedures, and post-disaster time frame, which includes clean-up, decontamination efforts, ecosystem rehabilitation, and environmental management. It is our responsibility to create such a training and information center, which would serve both the general public and decision makers.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I must reaffirm the great importance of a proper reconstruction process. It is clear that the whole nation expects Aceh rehabilitation and reconstruction as a real model of sustainable development in practice. Suggestions of applying all environmental concerns based on democratic values are not merely come out from long social-conflict history in Aceh, but from a deep, underlying hope that this is a turning point for a future development system and practice in Indonesia.

Our government as a whole is now prepared to be much more assertive in reconfirming our strong commitment to develop cities, communities, settlements, and, most importantly, livelihoods that applies environmental principles to achieve sustainability. Basic infrastructures like sanitation and waste management system should be environmentally-friendly, decentralized and independently serve each community, while energy supplies must depend on local alternative and clean sources. Socio-economic and human development approach must be led by each community, with the government providing all the needed education, assistance and guidance. Furthermore, there is no compromise in securing tenure and property rights to the local communities, as sustainability is usually most achieved by those who relies and depends on local sources and environment to live.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The surging spirit of solidarity among us today can be used as the foundation for productive and mutually respectful partnerships to implement sustainable development. The devastated impacts of the earthquake and tsunami in Aceh brought a clearer understanding and much higher level of consensus among the international community about the need to work together in increasing the level of preparedness for the possibility of going through similar disasters in the future.

I would like to propose the following programs for potential collaboration between the Ministry and the donor community in the future. There are five priority programs that need support from international community: 1) capacity building in good environmental governance at national and local levels, 2) revitalization of environmental impact assessments (AMDAL), 3) increased utilization of regional and local spatial plans for sustainable natural resources management, 4) development of environmental services mechanisms and incentives, and 5) development of centers for integrated technical support on environmental quality and sustainable development.

A comprehensive program of developing technical capacity in environmental management will cover conservation, environmental technology, environmental quality monitoring, environmental forensics, waste management, research and laboratory

infrastructures, environmental assessment, economic incentives, and compliance policy instruments. Programs for future development of spatial planning is meant to achieve best practices based on sustainable livelihoods of the local communities, integration of environmental aspects in all kinds of decisions including disaster management, and securing environmental-friendly settlements and tenure rights.

Human development and capacity building program will cover public education and awareness, good environmental governance, streamlined interdepartmental coordination, and extensive multi-stakeholders network and information exchange. All of the major programs above are hopefully set above a high standard of implementation and commitments.

Furthermore, the government will not avoid the necessity of national and regional institutional reform and reorganization as a mean to achieve our goal, yet we strongly believe that there will be no perfect institutions if not put to a good use.

Disaster may set us aside and re-prioritize our efforts for a moment, but our commitments, aims and goals are still as valid and urgent as ever, if not better.

Thank you,

Minister of Environment,

Ir. Rachmat Witoelar