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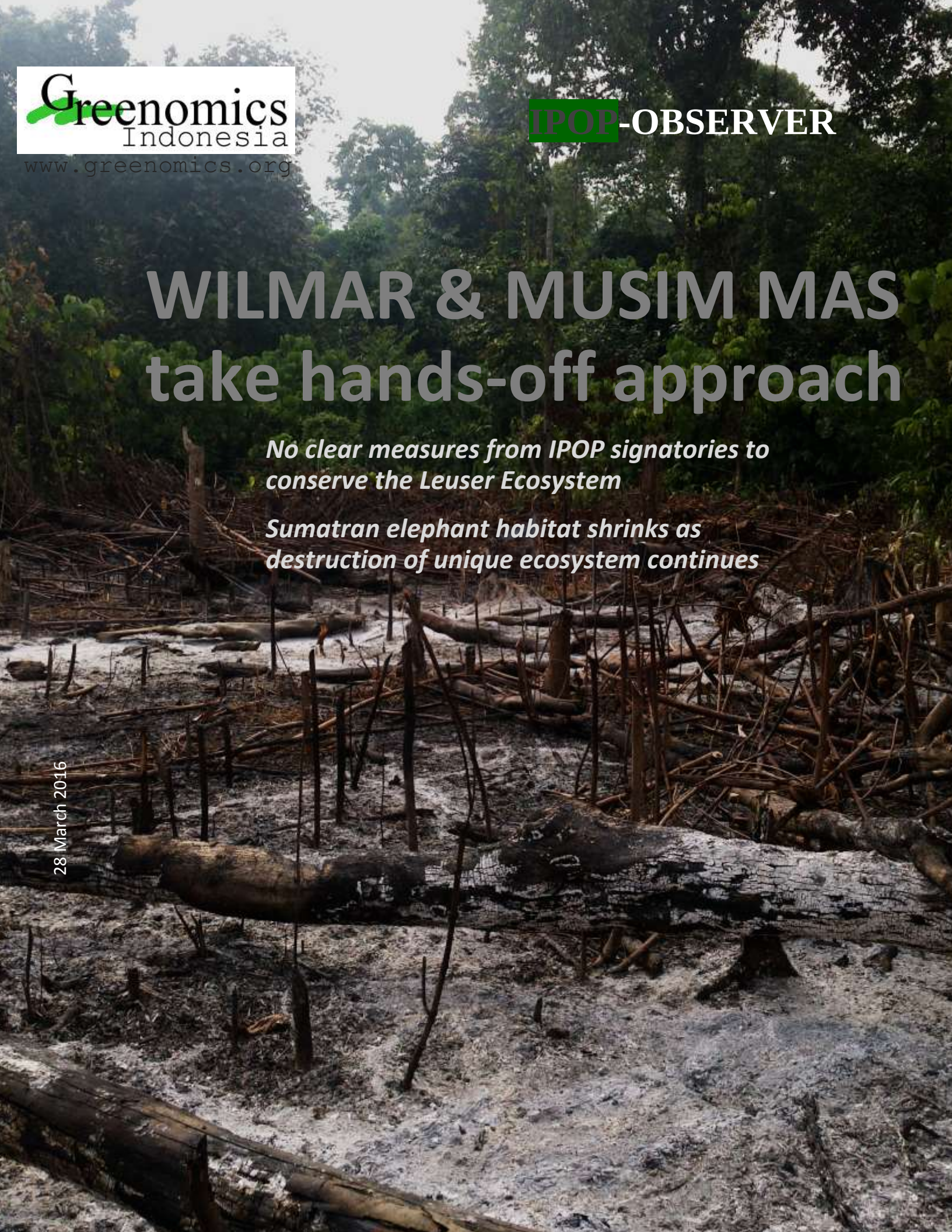
IPOP-OBSERVER

WILMAR & MUSIM MAS take hands-off approach

No clear measures from IPOP signatories to conserve the Leuser Ecosystem

Sumatran elephant habitat shrinks as destruction of unique ecosystem continues



28 March 2016

097°39'12.1”E 04°31’26.1"N - 20 March 2016

It is preferable that Wilmar and Musim Mas don’t proclaim the protection of the Leuser Ecosystem as part of their commitments if they are unable or unwilling to play a concrete role in protecting the remaining 1,200 hectares of High Carbon Stock (HCS) forests located in the Mopoli Raya Group’s palm oil concession, as part of a greater goal of conserving the Leuser Ecosystem.

BACKGROUND

It turns out, against expectations, that both Wilmar and Musim Mas are simply taking a hands-off approach to the conservation of the Leuser Ecosystem.

They have failed to give a particular supplier of theirs any contributions whatsoever for conserving tracts of intact forest located in the palm oil concession of this supplier which form part of the Leuser Ecosystem.

This is after land clearances in these concession were ended around eight months following the publication of three Greenomics reports which questioned what solutions could be provided by IPOP, given that the supplier to these two palm oil giants was continuing to encroach on the habitat of the Sumatran elephant in the Leuser Ecosystem, in the eastern region of Aceh.

The first Greenomics report, published in early May 2015, divulged the vast extent to which the bulldozing of the Sumatran elephant habitat was taking place in palm oil concession belonging to the Mopoli Raya Group, one of the suppliers to both Wilmar and Musim Mas.

The second report, released by Greenomics just over a month later, sought to find out what solutions IPOP offered with respect to the inaction of these two IPOP signatories. Such questions were considered necessary as no solutions had been forthcoming at all from IPOP despite land clearances of the Leuser Ecosystem continuing to take place in palm oil concession during the month since this practice had been exposed in the first Greenomics report.

The third report, published by Greenomics at the end of June 2015, a full nine months after the signing of IPOP, revealed that the clearing of the Sumatran elephant habitat in the palm oil concession forming part of the Leuser Ecosystem was still underway. In this third report, Greenomics stated its conclusion that IPOP had zero impact in conserving the Leuser Ecosystem.

Only after the release of this third report was it confirmed that the clearing of the Sumatran elephant habitat would be ended, starting from the end of June 2015. As of the end of January 2016, no land-clearing operations had been visibly detected by Landsat 8, at least none that involved new blocks in the palm oil concession concerned.

Since ending its land-clearing activities, the Mopoli Raya Group has been conducting an HCS forest assessment aimed at mapping which blocks in its palm oil concession constitute HCS forests and which are recommended for the development for palm oil plantations.

However, it seems that neither Wilmar nor Musim Mas has contributed a single cent to their rogue supplier. They could have, for example, assisted in hiring an international consultant to perform the assessment of HCS forests in the Mopoli Raya Group's palm oil concession. The two IPOP signatories have instead engaged their supplier merely by means of "talks".

This has even been acknowledged by a representative of the Mopoli Raya Group to Greenomics, and is quite a shocking state of affairs!

097°39'11.0"E 04°31'23.2"N - 20 March 2016

Greenomics met with the Mopoli Raya Group representative to ask whether the group was aware of the burning and opening up of the HCS forests in its concession.

Greenomics provided the representative with maps and coordinates of the locations where this burning was taking place, so that quick action could be taken by the group, with the immediate priority of stopping the escalation of the forest fires in these locations.

Greenomics went even further at the meeting, showing photographs of the affected locations which depicted the extent to which land burning was still taking place in the palm oil concession.

The representative subsequently coordinated with his field team and instructed it to check the locations concerned. Greenomics was then informed by the Mopoli Raya Group representative that the fires in its palm oil concession were the work of third parties.

Another question Greenomics put to the Mopoli Raya Group representative was whether any technical assistance had been provided by Wilmar and/or Musim Mas to support the Mopoli Raya Group in protecting those parts of the Leuser Ecosystem located in its concession from threats. The surprising answer from the representative was “none whatsoever.”

The final question was whether Wilmar and/or Musim Mas had made any offers of collaboration for protecting the HCS forests situated in palm oil concession that form part of the Leuser Ecosystem. For example, had they offered to carry out joint measures or express joint concerns with respect to the Leuser Ecosystem? The response was once again similar: “the two IPOP signatories had come forward with no offers at all.”

With all this in mind, this report reveals the results of spatial analyses and field observations conducted by Greenomics Indonesia which demonstrate that HCS forests that the Mopoli Raya Group has been successfully prohibited from clearing remain difficult to preserve due to encroachment activities by third parties, including the use of chainsaws and land fires.

097°39'11.4”E 04°31’25.25"N - 20 March 2016

METHODOLOGY

This report used spatial analyses supplemented by ground checks. Real-time USGS Landsat 8 images were used to analyze changes in land cover conditions in the concession concerned. Other relevant legal and spatial data were also used in support of the spatial analyses and field observations.

097°39'12.1"E 04°31'26"N - 20 March 2016

HCS FORESTS IN THE LEUSER ECOSYSTEM REMAIN UNPROTECTED

With respect to the first two reports issued by Greenomics (dated 6 May and 10 June 2015), on 15 June 2015 Wilmar announced that it had temporarily suspended purchasing CPO from the Mopoli Raya Group.

In response to the Mopoli Raya Group's ongoing clearing of parts of the Leuser Ecosystem situated in its concession, Greenomics released a third report on 30 June 2015 which concluded that nine months after the signing of IPOP, the vaunted palm oil pledge was still having zero impact on protecting the Leuser Ecosystem. Eventually, on 9 July 2015 Wilmar announced that it had permanently suspended purchasing CPO from the Mopoli Raya Group.

As to Musim Mas, in response to the first two Greenomics reports, in its grievance update the company on 23 June 2015 announced that it had suspended purchasing CPO from the Mopoli Raya Group and had sent several letters requesting that the group stop its practice of land clearing.

A week later, on 30 June 2015, Musim Mas released an official statement on its website in response to the Greenomics report of the same day, calling for a better solution to ensure the production of sustainable palm oil that is deforestation-free.

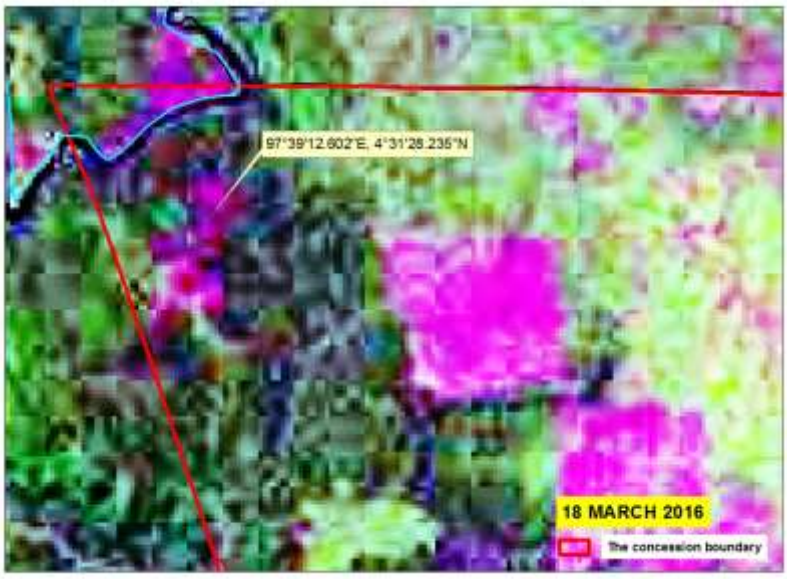
After the Mopoli Raya Group ended its land-clearing operations around eight months, the remaining HCS forests situated in its palm oil concession located in the Leuser Ecosystem have failed to be kept intact.

In its official statement, Musim Mas also reaffirmed its conviction that the IPOP platform can be part of the solution.

Musim Mas said that suspending the purchasing of CPO from its third-party suppliers, including the Mopoli Raya Group, was not a solution. Even though Musim Mas declared that it had stopped buying CPO from specific suppliers since May 2015, external stakeholders have requested that the company provide greater scrutiny to the ongoing forest clearance perpetrated by its third-party suppliers.

Opening up of HCS forests using chainsaws and fires is taking place on the ground and is continuously escalating

Landsat 8 images taken on 30 January 2016 and 18 March 2016, showed that HCS forests found in the Mopoli Raya Group's palm oil concession had been opened up.



It is very unfortunate that neither Wilmar nor Musim Mas seems to have a real commitment to preserving the Sumatran elephant habitat in the Leuser Ecosystem. Their lack of any contribution whatsoever to preserving the HCS forests of the Leuser Ecosystem is regrettable and should be questioned.

Wilmar and Musim Mas need to explain what contribution, in their view, they have made to protecting the HCS forests located in the Mopoli Raya Group's palm oil concession.

With specific reference to Musim Mas, which has declared that they believe IPOP platform "can be part of the solution" in protecting the Leuser Ecosystem, what measures have been developed in cooperation with the Mopoli Raya Group to jointly protect the HCS forests, which serve as the habitat of the Sumatran elephant, in parts of the Leuser Ecosystem situated in palm oil concession?

Is it fair that both Wilmar and Musim Mas have simply taken a hands-off approach when it comes to protecting the habitat of the Sumatran elephant, namely HCS forests in parts of the Leuser Ecosystem located in the Mopoli Raya Group's concession? Once again, is this the right approach?

097°40'43.84”E 04°29’38.24"N - Google Earth (4/3/2015)

Those HCS forests – which form part of the Leuser Ecosystem and serve as the habitat of the Sumatran elephant – located on Mopoli Raya Group’s palm oil concession need to be preserved by means of robust collaboration between Wilmar, Musim Mas and the Mopoli Raya Group itself.

Wilmar and Musim Mas should be taking the lead in this matter. On the contrary, these two groups are doing nothing other than neglecting their responsibilities.

THE HANDS-OFF APPROACH OF WILMAR AND MUSIM MAS IS UNJUSTIFIED

Wilmar and Musim Mas should not be abdicating responsibility for the clearing of the HCS forests in the Mopoli Raya Group's palm oil concession for any reason whatsoever.

The two IPOP signatories should instead be living up to their commitment to protect the Leuser Ecosystem by sharing their resources with the Mopoli Raya Group to safeguard the concession's HCS forests. In business terms, they should also be striving to come up with a favorable deal for the three business groups which ensures that the habitat of the Sumatran elephant in HCS forests located in palm oil concession is protected on an ongoing basis.

Wilmar and Musim Mas should not be afraid of business losses. They should instead demonstrate to the public that their commitment to protecting the Leuser Ecosystem is not simply a hollow promise.

These two palm oil conglomerates should utilize the HCS forests in the Mopoli Raya Group's concession to conduct a pilot project on which they could base their further conservation of the Leuser Ecosystem. In doing this, they would have to be prepared to make sacrifices.

Wilmar and Musim Mas need to make concrete contributions on the ground – not just through press releases or progress reports – towards the protection of the Leuser Ecosystem, and especially the HCS forests situated in the Mopoli Raya Group's palm oil concession.

We are waiting expectantly for some concrete contributions to be made by Wilmar and Musim Mas towards the protection of HCS forests – the habitat of the Sumatran elephant – situated in the Mopoli Raya Group's palm oil concession in the Leuser Ecosystem.

097°39'01.8"E 04°31'19.2"N - 20 March 2016

097°39'11.3"E 04°31'08.1"N - 19 March 2016

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Wilmar and Musim Mas must immediately announce clear and measured steps that they plan to take, along with a strict timeline for taking them.
- Wilmar and Musim Mas must take concrete action on the ground, starting now, to protect HCS forests – the habitat of the Sumatran elephant – situated in the Mopoli Raya Group's palm oil concession in the Leuser Ecosystem.

It is clear that more than just a commitment on paper from the IPOP signatories with respect to the protection of the Leuser Ecosystem is needed.

097°39'10.9"E 04°31'24.2"N - 20 March 2016

IPOP-OBSERVER – an initiative by Greenomics Indonesia to identify the extent to which IPOP is being implemented in Indonesia – uses the results of spatial monitoring, field observations and legal analysis to question the extent of the role played by IPOP signatories in providing solutions to their suppliers in their efforts to fulfill one of the objectives of IPOP, namely, to find solutions for sustainable palm oil that is deforestation free. The main purpose of IPOP-OBSERVER is to share lessons learned from the implementation of IPOP.

For further discussion please contact:

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