

Actions sought to protect mangroves

The Jakarta Post 26 Apr 2017 Desy Nurhayati

Participants of the International Conference on Sustainable Mangrove Ecosystems are urging all stakeholders to improve their work to ensure the sustainable management of mangrove ecosystems worldwide.

Concluding the four-day conference with the Bali Declaration last week, the 200 participants from 24 countries called on stakeholders to work more closely with coastal communities to ensure the conservation, restoration and protection of mangroves. Evidence and case studies presented at this conference demonstrated conclusively that with adequate investment sustainable mangrove management can play a significant role in implementing Articles 5 and 7 of the Paris Agreement on the conservation and enhancement of carbon sinks, in enabling adaptation to climate change and in achieving the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

The conference also revealed the importance of involving local communities in the restoration and rehabilitation of mangroves worldwide and in sustainable mangrove management.

"Mangrove ecosystems provide many goods and environmental services essential for the livelihoods of coastal peoples, the sustainability of fisheries and biodiversity conservation, and they store among the highest densities of carbon of any ecosystem globally," said Hilman Nugroho, the director general for watershed and forest protection at the Environment and Forestry Ministry.

However, he said mangrove ecosystems are under threat worldwide, with up to 50 percent of the world's mangroves having been lost in the last 40 years. At least one-quarter of the surviving mangroves have been moderately to severely degraded, Hilman added.

The first point of the key measures was to prioritize the conservation and sustainable use of mangrove ecosystems in national policies, laws and regulations at all levels of government, and to strengthen law enforcement to reduce the continuing loss and degradation of mangrove ecosystems.

The conference also recommended the clarification of land tenure and user rights for communities with concern for cultural sensitivity and promoting the effective involvement and empowerment of local communities, especially women.

The last point in the conference recommendation was to generate knowledge about the rates, patterns, causes, and consequences of change in mangrove ecosystems from the local to the global scale.

The conference also presented some best practices in the management of mangrove ecosystems in some countries worldwide, including Indonesia. In Bintuni Bay in West Papua, PT Bintuni Utama Murni Wood Industries (BUMWI) has set a good example of sustainable mangrove forest management certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

The mangrove forest in Bintuni Bay is one of the largest of its kind in the world, covering approximately 260,000 hectares. It is an important natural resource for communities and provides significant environmental benefits to surrounding areas.

Since 1988, the firm has been enhancing the benefits of the mangrove forests for local people and stakeholders within the area. Currently, the company manages 82,120 hectares of forest for wood chip production.