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“Reconcile land system changes
with planetary health”

Attaining sovereignty over climate: evolution of forest policy instruments in addressing indonesia’s climate challenges

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Abstract

As a large developing country, Indonesia faces the dual challenge of addressing climate change while sustaining economic growth. Despite these competing priorities, the country has consistently demonstrated its commitment to global climate action. Indonesia ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1994, the Kyoto Protocol in 2004, and the Paris Agreement in 2016. Acknowledging the significant role of the land-use and forestry sectors in greenhouse gas emissions, the government has set a target to achieve net emissions balance in these sectors by 2030.

Over the past two decades, Indonesia’s environmental governance has undergone a notable shift. While the Kyoto Protocol era was characterised by a reliance on regulatory instruments, the implementation of the Paris Agreement has seen a gradual incorporation of economic instruments into the policy mix. This paper argues that the evolution of Indonesia’s forest policy instruments reflects a broader transition—from a recipient of international support under the Kyoto framework to a more autonomous actor formulating voluntary climate commitments through its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).

Using the Political Process Inherent Dynamics (PIDA) framework, this study investigates the key drivers behind Indonesia’s shift from regulatory to economic forest policy instruments. Although international institutions have played a significant role in shaping this transition, they are not the sole influence. Domestic factors, including decentralisation, debates on national sovereignty, and contested perceptions of Indonesia’s economic identity, have been equally crucial. The study concludes that these internal dynamics are essential to understanding how Indonesia has reconfigured its forest policy approach in response to climate change.

Keywords: Climate change, developing country, forest policy, Indonesia