



— Joint press release by Friends of the Earth Asia Pacific: Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI), Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC), Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM)

TRANSBOUNDARY HAZE IS AN ECOLOGICAL CRISIS: Coalition Urges Transnational Corporate Responsibility and Recognition of Ecocide

Jakarta, September 09 2026 — Friends of the Earth Asia Pacific (FoE APAC) condemns the recurring transboundary haze crisis in Southeast Asia, as smoke from forest and land fires currently burning in Indonesia, particularly in the Kalimantan region, has reportedly reached neighboring countries such as Malaysia and the Philippines. FoE APAC members Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI), Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM), and the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC) — warn that the recurrence of transboundary haze in Southeast Asia must no longer be treated as a seasonal disaster but an ecological crisis leading to ecocide. Transboundary haze is a consequence of forest and peatland destruction, weak environmental governance, and the failure of governments to hold corporations accountable for forest and land fires.

FoE APAC is calling for urgent action to address the structural causes of the crisis and prevent communities across Southeast Asia from being repeatedly exposed to hazardous air pollution.

The impact of haze from forest and land fires, which crosses administrative and national borders, has been felt directly by millions of people in several Southeast Asian countries. People are forced to face health threats, the loss of their right to clean air, and disruptions to their daily activities, education, and economic livelihoods. Vulnerable groups, including children, women, the elderly, Indigenous Peoples, and communities living near the affected areas, are the ones most severely impacted by this recurring crisis. Therefore, FoE APAC is calling on the Indonesian government to take responsibility for the crisis immediately.

FoE APAC also emphasizes that responsibility for this crisis does not lie solely with the Indonesian government. Companies that operate in, have investments in, hold shares in, maintain business relationships with, or exercise control over the plantation and forestry industries in Indonesia must also be held accountable. This includes companies and business

groups with capital ties, ownership interests, or control from Singapore and Malaysia. WALHI found that several companies, both those directly based in those two countries and those whose shares are listed there, have experienced fires, such as Wilmar International Group, Sinar Mas Group, and Genting Group. The countries of origin of the capital and the companies themselves cannot absolve themselves of responsibility when they reap economic benefits from industries operating in Indonesia, while the ecological and social costs are borne by the people of Indonesia and other Southeast Asian nations.

“Having ratified the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution through Law No. 26 of 2014, Indonesia has an obligation to ensure that fire prevention measures are implemented seriously and effectively. On the other hand, it is also unfair for neighboring countries to claim only victimhood while companies linked to their economies profit from industries driving forest and land fires. Singapore and Malaysia must hold these corporations accountable,” emphasized Boy Jerry Even Sembiring, Executive Director of WALHI.

FoE APAC argues that the recurring forest and peatland fires are not merely a matter of technical failures in extinguishing the fires. This crisis is the result of systematic damage to forest and peatland ecosystems through deforestation, peatland drainage, the expansion of monoculture plantations, and weak oversight of corporate activities. When such damage occurs on a large scale, repeatedly, and causes serious and long-lasting impacts on human life and ecosystems, the international community must begin to view it as a form of environmental crime that requires stronger accountability.

“For too long, the people of Southeast Asia have borne the brunt of recurring ecological destruction. When forests and peatlands are destroyed, fires know no national borders; therefore, accountability must not stop at national boundaries either. Corporations, capital owners, and the countries serving as investment hubs must all be held accountable,” said Meenakshi Raman, President of SAM.

Therefore, FoE APAC urges the United Nations (UN) and the international community to strengthen the recognition and development of an international legal framework on ecocide, particularly regarding large-scale, systematic environmental destruction that causes severe and long-lasting damage. Forest and peatland fires, which destroy forests and peatlands, release massive amounts of emissions, damage biodiversity, threaten people’s lives, and cause transboundary pollution, must not continue to be treated merely as an administrative issue or an annual disaster.

Recognition of ecocide is essential to ensure that large-scale environmental destruction is no longer viewed as an acceptable consequence of economic activity and development. The world needs stronger legal mechanisms to ensure that states, corporations, capital owners, and those who profit from environmental destruction cannot continue to evade accountability.

For communities in affected countries, transboundary smoke also demonstrates that environmental issues in one country can directly become health and safety concerns for communities in another. Therefore, resolving this crisis requires stronger regional cooperation that goes beyond diplomatic responses once the smoke has crossed borders. ASEAN must ensure transparency regarding the sources of the fires, the condition of forest and peatland areas, and the companies operating in the affected regions.

“A long-term solution to the haze crisis cannot be achieved without fundamental changes in forest and land governance. Countries in the region must have the courage to address the root causes of the problem, including development models that continue to drive the exploitation of natural resources and increase the vulnerability of ecosystems to fires,” said Mai Taqueban, Executive Director of LRC.

Friends of the Earth Asia Pacific calls on the people of Indonesia, Malaysia, and all the people of Southeast Asia to build cross-border solidarity in the face of this crisis. Transboundary haze is not a problem confined to a single country, nor is it a natural disaster that must be accepted as an annual occurrence. The public must come together to demand the right to clean air, good health, and a healthy environment. The public must also continue to urge the government to disclose information, enforce the law, and ensure that corporations causing damage cannot continue to reap profits while the public bears the ecological and social costs.