

H. E. Joko Widodo
President of the Republic of Indonesia
Istana Merdeka
Jakarta Pusat 10110
Indonesia

Dear President Widodo,

Like you, we care deeply about conservation and creating economic growth opportunities that preserve and sustain the environment. Indonesia's natural beauty is admired and appreciated around the world. Indonesia hosts one of the highest levels of biodiversity on earth. Already, Indonesia is demonstrating leadership in the international community and at home.

We commend your vision to lead Indonesia into a new era of climate action, pledging to reduce Indonesia's emissions growth by up to 41 percent below business as usual by 2030, and to help the people and natural heritage of Indonesia by curbing deforestation and rehabilitating 12 million hectares of degraded land. This vision of environmentally responsible growth has the potential to boost Indonesia's global market access by allowing the country to become a globally recognized source of responsibly sourced products, boosting the economy.

A key element of environmentally responsible growth is sustainable infrastructure. Done right, energy and infrastructure projects have the potential to drive economic growth and help people while channeling development in ways that do not adversely affect the environment.

In that context, we urge you to take a heroic action to protect the newly-discovered Tapanuli orangutan by canceling construction of the proposed Batang Toru dam project. The Batang Toru dam was authorized *before* the Tapanuli orangutan species (*Pongo tapanuliensis*) was identified in 2017 by scientists (including Anton Nurcahyo, Dyah Perwitasari-Farajallah, Puji Rianti, and Joko Pamungkas from Indonesia). As such, their habitat is globally important, and the conservation of the Tapanuli orangutan has become both an Indonesian and international conservation priority. There are just eight living great ape species, and we know that your actions to protect the Tapanuli orangutan would be long celebrated, a powerful piece of your legacy to Indonesia.

There are other key new pieces of information about the project that merit its reconsideration and cancellation:

- With only an estimated 800 Tapanuli orangutans in existence, this new species is designated as critically endangered. Modeling suggests that if more than one percent of the population is depleted each year – more than 8 individuals – the species will go extinct.
- The Batang Toru dam will mean extinction for the Tapanuli. This project was conceived and planned more than half a decade before the new species was identified, so it could not have taken into account its impact on the Tapanuli.
- The project has not taken into account the impact of the hydroelectric dam and supporting infrastructure on the Tapanuli Orangutan in its AMDAL (environmental impact assessment).
- Indigenous Peoples in North Sumatra say that the project will evict them from their ancestral lands.

We encourage you to review the dam's siting and work with the relevant local government agencies to identify alternative options for increasing energy production, such as solar or geothermal. For example, the Sarulla geothermal electricity project that currently provides electricity to the area could be expanded without adversely impacting orangutans.

At the end of the day, it would be a tragedy to drive the extinction of the Tapanuli orangutan for a mere 510 megawatts of energy, less than one percent of Indonesia's generation capacity - especially when overcapacity is a significant concern and the nearby Sarulla geothermal facility could be expanded, providing clean energy to support the region's infrastructure and development. There is ample financing available that can help develop this and other clean energy sources as an alternative.

In light of the recent scientific and conservation developments, we beg you to secure a future for one of Indonesia's natural wonders. Please cancel the dam. Take steps to protect the Tapanuli orangutan and the broader Batang Toru ecosystem for the long term by introducing legislation to recognize its special status and protect the area from all forms of industrial development.

Thank you for your consideration. We would welcome a dialogue on this issue and other opportunities to promote environmentally responsible growth in Indonesia.

Sincerely,

Former U.S. Congressman Henry Waxman (Mighty Earth, Chairman)

Former U.S. Secretary of Commerce and U.S. Ambassador to China Gary Locke

Former U.S. Congressman and Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Howard Berman

Former U.S. Congressman George Miller

The Honorable Zac Goldsmith, MP United Kingdom

Former U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia Robert Blake, Jr. (Board Co-Chair, US-Indonesia Society)

Former U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia Cameron Hume

Chelsea Clinton and Marc Mezvinsky

Alison Sudol, Actress, Singer/Songwriter and IUCN Goodwill Ambassador

Panut Hadisiswoyo - Orangutan Information Center

Hardi Baktiantoro, Center for Orangutan Protection

Franky Samperante, PUSAKA

Farwiza Farhan, Yayasan HAKA

Kusnadi Oldani, FOKUS [Forum Orangutan Sumatra]

Teguh Surya, Madani

Karlo Lumban Raja, Sawit Watch

Helen Buckland, Sumatran Orangutan Society

Dr. Ian Redmond, Chairman of Ape Alliance

"Marc Ancrenaz, Dr. med. vet. (PhD). HUTAN - Kinabatangan Orang-utan Conservation Programme
Scientific Director"

Leif Cocks, President - The Orangutan Project

Michelle Desilets, Orangutan Land Trust

Irena Wettstein, PanEco Foundation

Dr Ian Singleton, Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme

Erik Meijaard, Adjunct Professor, University of Queensland

Upreshpal Singh, Friends of the Orangutans

Dr. William Laurance (scientist, conservationist, and founder of ALERT)

Russell A. Mittermeier, Ph.D., IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group Chair and Global Wildlife Conservation
Chief Conservation Officer

Dirck Byler, IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group, Section on Great Apes, Chair

Rebecca Kormos, Ph.D., IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group, Section on Great Apes, Deputy Vice-Chair

Serge Wich, Ph.D., IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group, Section on Great Apes, Vice-Chair

Karen B. Strier, President, International Primatological Society

Bill McKibben, Founder, 350.org

Anja Lillegraven, Rainforest Foundation Norway

James Askew, Research Fellow at Carnegie Institution for Science

Michael Brune, Sierra Club

Iain Keith, Avaaz.org

Gary Shapiro, Ph.D, President, Orang Utan Republik Foundation

Mollie Bloomsmith, PhD; President, American Society of Primatologists

Hannah Lownsbrough, Executive Director, SumOfUs