



For immediate release

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Environmental activists: Call for the Indonesian government to tighten up plastic waste importation and its contaminants

Jakarta, 27 August 2019 - In 2017-2018 imports of plastic waste by Indonesian plastic and paper recycling companies increased dramatically, more than 150% compared to previous years. Malaysia, the Philippines, Cambodia, has returned more than 80 containers of mixed plastic waste mainly from the United States, which entered their country. Indonesia must seriously stop importing plastic waste and plastic-contaminated paper and immediately review its import policy on plastic waste. Environmental activists recommend the Indonesian government to follow China's steps in setting contaminants in imported waste by 0.5% for two years.

Earlier this year, Indonesia returned more than 50 plastic waste containers imported by several plastic and paper factories in Batam, Banten, Karawang, Tangerang and Surabaya. Observations conducted by environmental activists over the past six months have shown an increase in air pollution from burning plastic waste and in several complaints as well as conflicts in the community due to contamination from unwanted imported plastic waste. With the encouragement of reports from civil society and residents in the vicinity of informal landfill sites, a wave of re-exports of more than 350 imported plastic waste containers this month underscores the seriousness of Indonesia in the eyes of the world.

Indonesia produces around 9.5 million tons of plastic waste annually. The import of plastic waste in 2018 shows a trading volume of approximately 320,000 tons with a value of about USD 90 million. However, observations by environmental activists in the field indicate that around 20-40% of the imported waste is not appropriately managed and disposed of in the environment.

"WALHI appreciates the fast action of the Customs to send back more than 350 imported waste containers containing pollutants, including B3 (toxic, hazardous substances) to the country of origin. For the sake of people's safety and the environment, the President needs to support this performance in the form of total cessation of waste shipments to Indonesia. That way, Indonesia

has the capacity and a reliable mechanism to prevent the entry of dangerous contaminants into the country," said Nur Hidayati, WALHI's National Executive.

"Imported plastic that cannot be recycled, mostly will be burned. Burning plastics spread toxic fumes and leaves ashes with high dioxin concentration that enters the food chain and the lungs of residents, especially children," said Yuyun Ismawati, from Nexus3/BaliFokus Foundation. "Some additives used in all types of plastics are recognized as carcinogenic chemicals and are banned in developed countries. Recycling plastic that contains B3 into another product means recycling the poison. Imported plastic should be included in the LarTas (Limited Ban) list so that Indonesia can control imports of non-B3 waste more tightly."

"Almost all of the paper companies that we monitored misused their import licenses because they've imported plastic-contaminated paper scrap and trade it to the public. Even worse, they dump it on the riverbanks and former sand mining sites," said Prigi Arisandi from Ecoton. "Low-value plastic scrap waste generally burned and sorted recycled waste discharged into the environment without further treatment. Liquid waste from 12 paper industries in East Java Province that imported paper scrap also released microplastic into the Brantas River. As a result, the raw water source of the water supply company (PDAM) and 80% of the Brantas River fish samples contained microplastics in their guts. Burning unwanted imported plastic waste for tofu factory as fuel, and regarded this as the solution to manage wastes, created new problems. Released toxic gas containing dioxin and furan, causing health problems for the community, especially children, with the risk of respiratory illnesses, miscarriages, decreased intelligence, and even cancer," explained Prigi.

"The direction of reforming the importation policy of waste and or scrap must be directed at stopping the import of waste and or scrap waste. The initial step to remove barriers to law enforcement in terms of the definition of waste and or scrap. The clarity of the definition is the beginning needed to prevent the import of waste or rubbish," said Fajri Fadhilah from ICEL. "Furthermore, the President must ensure the alignment of rules on the importation of waste and or scrap among various types of legislation. Additionally, sanctions against violations of imported waste and or scrap must be done openly to the public."

In some areas, we found that entrepreneurs from China became investors or partnered with local people to establish home business plastic recycling whose licensing was in doubt. Local governments must monitor and evaluate the existence of a home business plastic recycling in their respective areas.

In various places in Jabodetabek and East Java, AZWI activists also found land contaminated with remnants of various sizes of plastic, whether burned or not, polluting the soil, agricultural land, and water bodies. Cleaning toxic contaminants from plastic pollution is not easy, not cheap, and requires the seriousness of the government.

Microplastic and plastic fiber is also commonly found in fish in Indonesia, in bottled drinking water, in salts, and even in human feces. The state must guarantee the right of citizens to live in a clean and healthy environment.

AZWI Recommendations for the Government of the Republic of Indonesia:

- 1. Reviewing policies and regulations regarding the importation of waste and paper, especially plastics and paper scraps, to limit contaminants or contamination of imported plastic/paper waste and scrap by 0.5%;**
- 2. Limiting certain types of imported plastics scrap, and only in the form of pellets, or only require minimal treatment/processing and/or ready to be used for production, and gradually stopping all imports of plastic waste;**
- 3. Prohibiting importing producers from transferring or trading imported waste to anyone;**
- 4. Importing producers must be responsible for cleaning up plastic pollution caused by changing hands, being sold and being 'donated' to other parties and the public, including checking the levels of dioxins and furans in the air, soil and water, as well as clearing the land from the ash from burning plastic waste and managing it in accordance with hazardous waste management regulations;**
- 5. Reviewing the permits of companies importing plastics and paper parlors, whether according to the licenses given and their practices do not pollute the environment;**
- 6. Setting limits, at the end of 2020 as the final limit for the import of dirty plastic waste into Indonesia, following the Basel COP-14 amendment agreement in early May 2019;**
- 7. Limiting the import volume of scrap only to a maximum of 50% of the currently installed/available factory capacity;**
- 8. Imports of non-hazardous waste must be included in the List of Limited and Prohibitions (LarTas) and removed from the Customs Green Line;**
- 9. Prohibit the use of hazardous materials as additives in plastic production and plastic recycling;**
- 10. Information about the source of plastic wastes and its potential for recycling must be available in an integrated manner to meet the need of the domestic industry. Also, public information related to import quota data, importer companies and the realization of the amount of plastic and paper waste imports must be accessible to the public;**
- 11. The quota for importing plastic waste must be limited, the production and consumption of domestic plastic packaging must also be drastically reduced;**
- 12. Extended Producers Responsibility (EPR) must be implemented and monitored;**
- 13. To reduce the risk of report manipulation, surveyor companies that verify the import and export of B3 and non-B3 waste must be added and not monopolized by PT Surveyor Indonesia and Sucofindo;**
- 14. Strictly prohibit the burning of plastic waste and avoid incineration technology to treat plastic waste to prevent and reduce the pollution of dioxins which found in chicken eggs and soil at disposal sites; and**
- 15. Affected communities must get free medical examinations and treatment from polluting companies and importers of waste.**

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AZWI (Aliansi Zero Waste Indonesia) AZWI (Alliance Zero Waste Indonesia) is a joint organization that works to encourage the implementation of the zero waste concept correctly with programs and initiatives that support the concept of waste management hierarchy, material life cycle, and sustainable production and consumption. AZWI was initiated by BaliFokus / Nexus3 Foundation, YPBB Association, Indonesian Society of Plastic Bag Diet Association, WALHI National, Greenpeace Indonesia, Indonesia Center For Environmental Law (ICEL), Ecoton Foundation, Zero Waste Community, and Bali Center for Environmental Education (PPLH) Bali.

Wahana Lingkungan Hidup (WALHI) is an environmental organization in Indonesia located in 28 provinces and has 473 members of the organization throughout the territory of Indonesia. Walhi works at the grassroots to advocate environmental cases (www.walhi.or.id)

Ecoton is a non-profit organization that aims to promote environmental justice for present and future generations, especially in sustainable wetland management.

ICEL is an independent non-governmental organization for environmental law, involved in advocacy and community empowerment

BaliFokus/Nexus3 an Indonesian non-governmental organization working to improve the community's capacity, quality of life and advocating a toxics-free environment together with all stakeholders in sustainable way. www.balifokus.asia