

COP26: Current economic growth is incompatible with the climate

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Siti Nurbaya Bakar, Indonesia's Minister of Environment and Forestry, home to the world's third largest rainforest, said on November 3 at COP26 that "forcing Indonesia to achieve zero deforestation by 2030 is clearly inappropriate and unfair.... She reinforced her point by noting that there are many ways to define deforestation, and that any agreement could not stop economic growth. [The massive development of the President Jokowi era must not be stopped in the name of carbon emissions or deforestation [...]]. He added that Indonesia could not...promise what we cannot do...and that Indonesia's priority is development...using

the example of forests that need to be cut down to build new roads. The government has also said that some forests will have to be cut down to grow food.

Promises that clash with specific realities

The race for growth is reinforced and fuelled by free trade agreements which represent an incentive for multilateral cooperation between parties to strengthen their participation in the development and implementation of international conventions and recommendations on trade facilitation. These allow each party to trade in specific products that are transported across the continent.

World trade in relation to some of this trade was worth 19,670 billion euros in 2018. At the beginning of 2019, the total world fleet amounted to 95,402 ships which accounted for 90% of the trade. These ships emitted 2.6% of CO2 emissions, 13% of sulphur dioxide (SO2) emissions and 12% of nitrogen dioxide (NO2) in 2018. All of these emissions are a consequence of trade in goods, largely as a result of free trade agreements, and have a direct impact on the planetary boundaries forming the Earth system.

Siti Nurbaya Bakar's remarks demonstrate that the implementation of the COP26 promises is stymied by specific realities that are shared by multiple states.

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World trade must provide access to an improved standard of living for all developing countries. They claim their right to a standard of living equivalent to that of the West. A way must be found to replace pernicious quantitative growth with sustainable qualitative growth! ■

