



CTA-026-Coral Reef Conference-Indonesia

How do we save coral reefs?

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2.4.14

Why the World Coral Reef Conference should not take place in Manado/ North Sulawesi/ Indonesia

The World Federation for Coral Reef Conservation is a non-profit NGO dedicated to collecting and reporting threats to reef health through active investigation and crowd sourcing. They have teamed up with the Save Bangka Island group a grassroots whistle-blower movement in Indonesia 35 kms away from the Regional Headquarter of the *Coral Triangle Initiative* in Manado,

North Sulawesi, a multi-million dollar building, the *small island Bangka* is on the verge to be blown up for mineral mining. The provincial Governor and the Regency head gave a Chinese company green light to go ahead with their destructive plans despite the resistance of the local communities and an Indonesian Supreme Court decision that ruled all permits granted so far have to be cancelled.

Bangka Island possesses beautiful white sandy beaches, colorful coral reefs, and a rich flora and fauna on land including sea eagles, nocturnal primate *tarsius spectrum*, and marsupial *bear cuscus*—all on the IUCN red list. Its forest and mangroves are protected by law. The marine environment of the island hosts various unique creatures like the prehistoric living fossil fish coelacanth, the sea mammal dugong, whale sharks, and also dolphins. The mangrove areas of the island help keep the stability of marine and terrestrial life and help prevent global warming, while at the same time, help secure future sources of marine food.

Bangka Island is part of the marine tourism industry of North Sulawesi—a source of income and livelihood to thousands of people. Mining will bring detrimental effects on the economy and sustainable growth. World-renowned dive areas like Bunaken National Marine Park and Lembeh Strait will also be affected. In the long term, North Sulawesi may vanish from the marine tourism map.

If the mining plans for Bangka Island go ahead, this will not only threaten the local fishing community that live on the island, but also the marine life found in this area. Despite the fierce resistance in the province which resulted in several attempts of intervention to the responsible Ministries and despite the violation of the law, the National Government is doing nothing to stop the North Sulawesi Provincial Government from its destructive plans.

The North Sulawesi Governor who stands as a presidential candidate in the Democrats party convention, fully supports Indonesia's version of the "*Blue Economy*" policy which basically opens up small islands, formerly protected by law from extractive and destructive industries, for large scale foreign investment in the mining sector. Progenitors of the Blue Economy program are the Indonesian President and his Democrat Party.

On the national level the Indonesian parliament in December 2013 pulled through a re-write of Constitutional Law 27/ 2007 for this purpose. On the provincial level the North Sulawesi in November 2013



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through as well written re-write of the long-term spatial development plan to accommodate mining on Bangka island. It's all set for big private money deals with extractive industries.

It was Manado that hosted the *World Ocean Conference* in 2009 which gave birth to the Coral Triangle Initiative of six Pacific countries including Indonesia whose leaders signed the treaty to protect its small islands and coastal areas for future generations by promoting development through small scale environmentally friendly enterprises in the sectors of fishery, tourism and agriculture. Now Manado is mapped out by the Indonesian Government to host the *World Coral Reef Conference* this year. This is a deceptive move and betrays the principles of the World Ocean Conference and the Coral Triangle Summit which were adopted in Manado in 2009. *It's time to remind Indonesia of the International treaties that were signed.*

We need a broad alliance of NGOs, marine scientists (out of the audience of scientists who are invited to the World Coral Reef Conference) and International Agencies like the UN to interfere and demand that: unless the mining plans for Bangka be abandoned, we believe it would be hypocrisy to hold the Coral Conference in Bangka.

www.wfcrc.org

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