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ENVIRONMENT

Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Lisa Perez Jackson:

Indonesia's Vision on Climate Change Must Be Carried Out

Lisa Perez Jackson never imagined that she would set foot in Indonesia. And she certainly did not expect her first visit to be as the representative of the U.S. President Barrack Obama to the inauguration ceremony of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono at the House of Representatives Building last Tuesday.

Of all the countries attending the ceremony, Jackson represented the United States, the country that is geographically the farthest away from Indonesia . "This was an amazing assignment and I have experienced something new every day," said the Administrator of the United States' Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – which is like a 'Minister' level position in Indonesia.

Jackson supported Hillary Clinton as the Democratic Party's presidential candidate and is the first African American who has ever been entrusted with this prestigious position. She supervises over 17,000 employees who are spread all over the United States.

The EPA was established in 1970 with a mission to protect the public health and prevent environmental destruction. The agency monitors all health and environmental issues in America. Given its considerable size in manpower and authority, the Washington based EPA is always at the forefront of environmental research, analysis, and education.

Jackson's visit to Indonesia was not limited to the inauguration. She also carried a mission to improve environmental and climate change cooperation between Indonesia and the United States. Last week on Wednesday, she met with the Governor of Jakarta, Fauzi Bowo, at the capital's Town Hall, to offer assistance in improving the quality of air in the city through a program called '*Breathe Easy in Jakarta.'*

The program will include technical assistance in emission reduction and conversion to environmental friendly fuels. "The Governor and I will work hard to fulfill our commitment in protecting the environment," she said.

A greater mission also looms for Jackson as she will be involved in the upcoming United Nations Forum on Climate Change in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Jackson said that the U.S. wants to engage with Indonesia while it leads the efforts to combat the impact of global warming. "The Obama administration has shown changes, including real efforts in reducing carbon emissions," said Jackson who was accompanied by her staff and assistant in a special interview with Adek Media Roza and Rudy Prasetyo from *Tempo* in Jakarta on Wednesday last week.

What is your impression of Indonesia?
This is my first trip to Indonesia. This is an incredible opportunity. In Jakarta, I have experienced something new every day. I have really enjoyed the trip and also the presidential inauguration. If there is an opportunity for me to come back, I will visit nice places in Indonesia. Unfortunately, this time the trip is very short. Tomorrow (Thursday October 22), I'll have to return to the U.S. and get back to work.

What is your opinion of President Yudhoyono?
He is a very warm and sincere person. I believe President Yudhoyono is strongly committed and has a vision for climate change.

Why did President Obama appoint you to attend Yudhoyono's presidential inauguration?
America and President Obama respect Indonesia. He actually wanted to attend the inauguration himself. Therefore, he wanted someone from his cabinet to lead the U.S. delegation, including Ambassador Cameron R. Hume, and witness the swearing-in ceremony of the President of Indonesia. We really pay serious attention to the ongoing democratization process, economic issues, and environmental issues including climate change in Indonesia.

What kind of environmental issues are you interested in Indonesia?
I have come because the institution that I lead (EPA) has cooperated with Indonesia and there are partnership issues related to environment such as pollution, clean energy, and climate change. I am very happy that in my first year as an EPA administrator (Jackson was appointed as EPA administrator upon U.S. Senate's approval on January 23, 2009); I was chosen for this assignment. I am very optimistic that the cooperation is mutually beneficial. The EPA provides technical and partnership assistance related to air pollution. American environmental standards can also be applied in Jakarta. I think there are many things that can be shared between the two parties.

How do you think Indonesia is handling environmental issues?
Indonesia has demonstrated a lot of interest in clean energy and climate change issues, which are among the priorities of Obama's policy. Indonesia has a tremendous opportunity in the future to demonstrate its commitment to environmental sustainability. One thing that impressed me was when I heard the speech of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in the recent meeting of G-20 leaders in the United States. Yudhoyono spoke about climate change as a shared problem. The handling of climate change, according to Yudhoyono, is an opportunity to develop a common awareness, and one of the solutions is by reducing carbon emissions.

What is the plan of the United States in the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen later this year?
The conference consists of major negotiations. President Obama has repeatedly said there are principles that must guide our actions as a member of the global community. Developed countries like the United States must do something meaningful to reduce emissions. But we know that no matter how great the actions that have been made, they will not mean much without the support and companionship of other countries.

What meaningful things have the U.S. done?
President Obama continues to work to shift the U.S. economy towards clean energy. The use of clean energy will be very useful along with the increase of energy. On his first opportunity in the White House, Obama carried out various actions, such as disbursing US$80 billion for clean energy and energy efficiency programs. The funds were used for research and development. The rest was used as a grant to assist the state governments and the formation of partnerships on an international scale. He also called for new laws in the United States to adjust the implementation of clean energy and climate change programs. The United States will position itself to make changes, both domestically and internationally, in particular on the climate change issue.

So, what is the position of developing countries, like Indonesia?
Developing countries need to make commitments and deal with climate change. As for a country like Indonesia, the U.S. respects Indonesia's vision on how to deal with climate change. But combating climate change should be done in a sustainable way and by reducing carbon emission from the beginning. Of course, every country has a different role and position.

During the George Bush administration, the U.S. was reluctant to support efforts to reduce emissions. Many are worried that the stance will not be changed, and that conferences won't produce important results. What's your comment?
President Obama is a person who acts like a statesman. He is firm and a hard worker. It's not a secret that Obama always emphasizes change. The institution that I lead is different now from the one it was during the Bush administration. The obvious difference is how the U.S. treats climate change as an important issue.

The change is not enough; hard work is needed because reducing emissions will impact industries and economic growth. Is the U.S. ready?
The U.S. government is not the only one determined to reduce emissions, so are the businessmen. The government can spend money for clean and efficient energy, but we cannot see concrete change and transformation before the private sector joins the process. There are opportunities for business circles to benefit from efforts to reduce emissions.

Lisa Perez Jackson

Place and Date of Birth:
Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, United States, February 8, 1962.

Education:
• *Summa cum laude* from Tulane University
• Master's degree in chemical engineering from Princeton University

Career:
• U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator, from January 2009 until present
• Chief of Staff to New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine, December 2008
• Commissioner of New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection, February 2006-November 2008
• U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Employee for more than 16 years.