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Govt against unilateral ban derived from green standards

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The government has warned developed nations against using "green" standards to unilaterally ban certain products from developing nations including Indonesia from entering the international market.

Speaking at a seminar on climate change, agriculture and trade in Bogor, West Java, Trade Minister Mari Elka Pangestu said Monday a multilateral consensus on framework for climate change should first be established.

"In the absence of multilateral consensus on climate change and carbon measurement, there is a risk that principles of non-discriminations, transparency and special differential treatment of international trading would be undermined," she said.

"We want to avoid the environmental issue from being misused by developed nations as contingency prevention to bar products from developing countries. It must be returned to trade principles in the WTO."

Amid rising global awareness of climate change issues, rich nations are being pressured to take the lead in cutting greenhouse gas emissions, with some of them having issued self-made green import certificates on agriculture and forest products.

Mari said such a trade system would be unfair since the developing countries would be the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, but had limited sources to address the threat.

"Therefore, climate change and international trade are global issues and must be dealt with multilaterally," he said of the need to have a global consensus on the issue.

Mari said trade ministers from across the world planned to meet in Poland in December to further discuss the implications of climate change on trade.

The seminar also discussed how trade liberalization could benefit, as well as hurt, the environment.

Robert Thomson, a professor of agriculture at the University of Illinois, said the environment could be threatened by increases in world food demand, which he estimated would double between 2000 and 2050.

"The rapid growth in demand for food due to population and income growth is outstripping environmentally sustainable production capacity," he said.

He said in countries with low income per capita, efforts to protect the environment would lag.

The United Nations predicts the world's population will reach 11.9 billion in 2050 from 7.8 billion in 2007. In Asia, it has been estimated the population will increase 31 percent to 5.2 billion in 2050 from 4 billion in 2007.