

Over the next four years, the ministry plans to define another 25,000 kilometers of forest boundaries.

“We admit it is an ambitious target to map 25,000 kilometers in just four years as we have never achieved such a figure,” Ali Arsyad, secretary of the director general of planning at the Forestry Ministry, said.

The team tasked to determine forest boundaries was headed by the regent or mayor in each area.

Regional elections and budget constraints were among the obstacles the government faces, Ali said.

The directorate general of planning has a budget of Rp 343 billion this year.

“If we look at that in context, the budget only allows for Rp 2,600 per hectare to accommodate all programs, including mapping,” he said.

He said the US allocates about US\$60 per hectare per year for its forest planning department, while the Malaysian government spends \$20 per hectare per year.

Forestry Minister Zulkifli Hasan has unveiled plans to hire the third party to accelerate the project to determine forest borders, including those between state forests and community forests.

“We need alternative solutions to resolve legal boundary lines by outsourcing the survey work,” he said.

Indonesia is the world’s third-largest forest nation, with about 120 hectares of rainforests.

Article 18 of the amended 1945 Constitution says the state recognizes and respects customary communities and their traditional rights.

However, the 1999 Forestry Law says customary forests are state forest that happen to be located in the customary areas.

The government divided forests based on their designated function as conservation, protected, production or community forests.

Millions of Indonesians currently live in or near forest areas, often in conflict as no formal rights have been granted to the local people.

Activists have repeatedly called on the government to accelerate reform on forest tenure problems before implementing the global scheme to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and land Degradation (REDD).

Director of Forest Watch Indonesia, Wirendro Sumargo criticized the government over its slow move to verify the border line of forest.

“The government should open to public how many hectares of the forests which already have legal border status not only in terms of kilometers,” he said.

The Alliance of Archipelagic Indigenous People (AMAN) has warned that REDD projects could trigger new conflicts if land tenure disputes are not unsettled.