Coordinating Role of State Institutions in Addressing Forest Degradation in Indonesia Following the Rise in Deforestation Cases

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Abstract. Deforestation in Indonesia is driven not only by economic expansion, but also by structural failures in state governance, particularly in the coordination of public institutions. This study employs a normative juridical method with statutory and conceptual approaches, drawing on academic literature, scientific journals, policy documents, and official government reports. The analysis is prescriptive, assessing how far the existing legal framework and institutional design enable effective coordination among the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, local governments, the Peatland and Mangrove Restoration Agency, law enforcement bodies, and other actors in addressing deforestation. The findings indicate that overlapping mandates, weak public participation, the influence of oligarchic interests, and the absence of an independent environmental enforcement body have undermined the supervision and prosecution of environmental crimes. Case illustrations from Papua, Kalimantan, and Sumatra demonstrate that deforestation is closely linked to authority conflicts, exploitative agrarian policies, and corporate impunity. The article recommends institutional reform through the establishment of an inter-agency environmental enforcement council, the development of an integrated forest data system, the strengthening of Indigenous peoples and civil society as primary forest watchdogs, and the creation of an independent environmental integrity commission. Such reforms are essential to curb deforestation and safeguard Indonesia's ecological sustainability.

Keywords: Deforestation, Environmental Governance, Institutional Coordination, Indigenous Peoples, Independent Oversight Body

1 Introduction

Deforestation has become a serious threat to the sustainability of Indonesia's ecosystems and to the quality of life of communities whose livelihoods depend on forests. The loss of forest cover does not only mean a reduction in trees, but also the collapse of ecological functions such as water regulation, biodiversity conservation, local climate control, and the living space of indigenous peoples and local communities. In the context of an archipelagic state with high biological richness like Indonesia, deforestation is in fact a direct threat to the future of sustainable development [1].

After 2020, various official reports and independent studies have shown that the loss of forest cover continues to occur, even though government narratives often emphasize a declining trend. The expansion of large-scale plantations, the development of strategic infrastructure, and land clearing for commodity-oriented projects have become the main drivers of land cover change. This pattern of deforestation demonstrates that economic development policies still position forests as a "reserve space" ready to be converted, rather than as ecological entities whose sustainability must be safeguarded [2].

These conditions indicate a structural problem in environmental governance in Indonesia. Various state actors at the central and regional levels hold authority related to forest and land management, yet coordination among them is often weak, overlapping, or even mutually contradictory. This fragmentation of authority results in unsynchronized spatial planning, licensing, and supervision, thereby creating loopholes for deforestation practices that are difficult to control.

This problem cannot be separated from the theoretical framework of environmental governance, which emphasizes the importance of synergy between the state, the market, and civil society. Ideally, sound environmental governance requires transparency, accountability, public participation, and the rule of law. However, in practice, unequal power relations and the dominance of economic interests often confine these principles to the normative level, preventing them from being translated into effective institutional practices.

Dini Suryani et al. show that in recent years natural resource governance has in fact experienced a democracy setback or democratic regression. Natural resource management policies have become increasingly controlled by the dominance of oligarchic forces that have strong access to key decision-making centers. In such a situation, public

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aspirations and ecological interests tend to be subordinated to agendas of capital accumulation and short-term development projects.

This oligarchic domination has implications for the weakening of civil society participation in decision-making processes related to natural resources, including forests. Mechanisms of public consultation, environmental feasibility assessment, and participatory forums often become mere formalities, rather than spaces of genuine deliberation that seriously consider objections and alternatives proposed by citizens. When civil society lacks strong bargaining power, oversight of deforestation activities involving large-scale economic interests becomes increasingly difficult to carry out.

Beyond the democratic dimension, the ecological impacts of deforestation have also become a major concern. Shafira Salsabil Auliya Ansar notes that large-scale deforestation has contributed to an increase in ecological disasters such as floods, landslides, and forest fires. The loss of forest cover alters hydrological patterns, accelerates surface runoff, increases slope vulnerability, and worsens drought during the dry season. Thus, deforestation not only damages ecosystems but also heightens disaster risks for downstream populations.

The problem is that ecological disasters triggered by deforestation are not adequately addressed due to weak law enforcement and government oversight. Legal instruments that are in fact available are often not implemented consistently. Law enforcement tends to target small actors on the ground, while major players behind land-use change frequently escape firm sanctions. This imbalance creates the impression that environmental law is negotiable when confronted with certain economic interests.

In the context of Papua, the problem of deforestation reveals an even more complex dimension because it is directly related to indigenous peoples' rights over customary land (customary land). Wea describes how authoritarian agrarian policies have reduced, and even revoked, the authority of indigenous communities over their own territories. Customary lands that have historically been managed collectively for sustainability are transferred as concessions to companies without the communities' full and free consent.

Such agrarian policies trigger massive deforestation and protracted agrarian conflicts. Forests that have long served as living spaces, sources of food, and the locus of cultural identity for indigenous peoples are transformed into monoculture production areas or mining zones. Social tensions rise, trust in the state declines, and local communities are forced to bear the ecological and social impacts of decisions they never truly agreed to[3].

These findings in Papua reaffirm that the issue of deforestation is essentially a matter of state governance, not merely a technical forestry problem. The state holds the right to control forests and natural resources, so every permit, release of forest areas, and land-use policy reflects how the state exercises its power. When policy orientations lean more toward investment interests without being balanced by the protection of indigenous peoples' rights and the environment, deforestation will continue to recur as a structural consequence.

From the perspective of institutional theory, this problem indicates a failure of checks and balances in natural resource management. Institutions that are supposed to function as watchdogs instead often find themselves vulnerable to political and economic intervention. In such a situation, internal supervisory mechanisms are no longer sufficient; an institutional architecture is needed that can stand more independently from the short-term interests of political authorities and market actors.

It is at this point that Hadi Karyono's idea about the importance of an independent state institution with supervisory authority becomes relevant. Such an institution is considered necessary to prevent the co-optation of power by particular political or economic interests in the management of natural resources. Institutional independence is expected to ensure that decisions related to forests and the environment are based on scientific considerations, principles of ecological justice, and the long-term public interest[4].

An independent supervisory body should ideally have full access to licensing data, the authority to conduct environmental audits, and the capacity to recommend sanctions and policy reforms in a binding manner. At the same time, this institution must create space for the participation of civil society and local communities in monitoring processes, so that oversight is not only top-down, but also supported by bottom-up social control. In this way, deforestation governance can shift from an elitist model to a more inclusive one.

Departing from these various issues, this article focuses its discussion on the coordinating role of state institutions in tackling deforestation in Indonesia. The analysis will be directed at examining how ministries and authorized agencies, both at the central and regional levels, interact with each other in the processes of planning, licensing, supervision, and law enforcement. From there, the study will identify the key coordination weaknesses that hinder efforts to control deforestation from working optimally [5].

In addition, this article also seeks to formulate a more effective model of institutional reform to respond to contemporary deforestation challenges. This model is constructed by integrating empirical findings on existing governance practices with theoretical frameworks on environmental governance, democracy, and institutions [6]. This

approach is expected to produce recommendations that are not only normative, but also realistic and operable within the framework of existing state institutions.

Ultimately, the development of the narrative on deforestation in this article is intended to demonstrate that saving Indonesia's forests requires more than merely technical policies in the forestry sector. Systematic reform of state governance, the strengthening of independent supervisory bodies, and the restoration of participatory space for civil society and indigenous peoples are all needed. With an analytical framework that is logical, systematic, and grounded in well-established theories, this article seeks to contribute to the formulation of more just and sustainable strategies for addressing deforestation.

2 Research Method

This study employs a normative juridical method that is specifically directed at examining how the legal framework regulates the coordination of state institutions in tackling deforestation in Indonesia [7]. Its primary focus is not on statistical measurement in the field, but on testing the consistency, adequacy, and effectiveness of legal norms that regulate forest and environmental governance. Through this approach, the study seeks to answer whether the institutional design established by legislation is sufficient to respond to large-scale forest degradation.

The normative juridical method is understood as legal research that takes positive legal norms as its main object of study. The research does not stop at merely inventorying regulations, but systematically and logically analyzes the principles, doctrines, and norms contained within them. This approach is highly relevant when the issue under examination concerns "what ought to be" done by the state in preventing and addressing deforestation, rather than merely "what is happening" in the field.

The choice of the normative juridical method is also based on the fact that the problem of deforestation in Indonesia is closely related to state policy choices, institutional design, and the configuration of authority among institutions [8]. Deforestation is not merely a technical forestry problem, but the product of political-legal decisions concerning licensing, spatial planning, supervision, and law enforcement.

Therefore, analysis of the legislative and regulatory framework becomes the main entry point for understanding the structural roots of the issue. The approaches used in this study are the statute approach and the conceptual approach [9]. The statute approach is intended to systematically examine the various written norms that regulate forestry, the environment, spatial planning, governance, and the design of state institutions that hold authority in these fields. In this way, it becomes possible to map out how coordination among state institutions is normatively formulated.

In applying the statute approach, this study first conducts an inventory of regulations starting from the constitutional level, laws, government regulations, and down to relevant ministerial regulations. After that, the regulations are classified by theme, such as the division of authority between the central and regional governments, licensing mechanisms, supervision, and environmental law enforcement. The next stage is to examine the hierarchical and systematic relationships among these regulations in order to identify disharmony, regulatory gaps, or overlapping norms. Meanwhile, the conceptual approach is used to clarify and sharpen the understanding of key concepts that form the foundation of the analysis. Concepts such as "coordination of state institutions," "environmental governance," "deforestation," "independent institutions," and "supervision" are not only understood linguistically, but are explained on the basis of theories of constitutional law, administrative law, and environmental governance. This approach is important to ensure that the discussion does not fall into a narrow interpretation, but is instead grounded in well-established theoretical frameworks.

Through the conceptual approach, this study constructs operational definitions that are consistent and accountable [10]. For example, the coordination of state institutions is not only understood as meetings between agencies, but as an arrangement that encompasses the allocation of authority, formal communication mechanisms, decision-making procedures, and a shared accountability system. Likewise, deforestation is understood not merely as the loss of tree cover, but as a structural process related to policies, permits, and economic practices that are facilitated or tolerated by the state.

The data sources in this study consist of primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials. Primary legal materials include the highest legal norms such as the 1945 Constitution, laws in the fields of forestry, environmental protection, spatial planning, as well as sectoral regulations governing licensing and the powers of state institutions. These primary legal materials serve as the main objects for assessing the extent to which the current legal structure provides a strong basis for coordination to prevent deforestation.

Secondary legal materials are obtained from academic literature, scholarly journals, research findings, textbooks, and scientific articles discussing deforestation, natural resource governance, environmental democracy, and institutional design. This literature provides the theoretical and analytical foundations for reading legal norms more

critically. In addition, secondary legal materials in the form of doctrines and opinions of experts relevant to the issues of coordination among state institutions and environmental oversight are also used.

Furthermore, the study makes use of non-legal materials that have direct relevance, such as policy documents, official reports from state institutions, and reports from independent bodies related to forest degradation and environmental law enforcement. These reports are not treated as primary empirical data as in quantitative research, but as social facts considered in assessing the extent to which the applicable legal norms are truly implemented. In this way, the relationship between the "legal text" and the "social context" in the issue of deforestation becomes visible.

Data collection techniques are carried out through library research and documentary study. The researcher systematically compiles legislation, scholarly literature, and relevant official reports, and then selects them based on criteria of novelty, relevance to the focus on deforestation, and the authority of the sources. This approach ensures that the data used are not only comprehensive, but also up to date and suited to the needs of the analysis.

Data analysis is conducted qualitatively with a prescriptive character. The first stage is to describe the content of legal norms and key concepts regulated in legislation. The second stage is to interpret them by using relevant legal principles, doctrines, and theories. The third stage is to evaluate whether the existing body of norms and institutional design is adequate to address deforestation, particularly in terms of coordination among state institutions.

The prescriptive nature of the analysis means that this study does not stop at explaining "what the rules say," but moves toward "what ought to be regulated or improved." In this context, the results of the analysis are directed at formulating normative recommendations concerning institutional reform and the strengthening of coordination mechanisms. These recommendations are developed on the basis of findings regarding substantive, procedural, and institutional weaknesses revealed through the reading of regulations and the factual reality of forest degradation.

Although grounded in the normative juridical method, this study still links its normative findings with the empirical reality of forest degradation in Indonesia. Data and reports on deforestation, forest fires, and agrarian conflicts are used as reflections of the extent to which existing legal norms are effectively implemented. In this way, the research avoids "textual positivism" that only views law on paper, and instead tests the performance of legal norms within a concrete social context.

The use of the empirical reality of forest degradation functions as a reliability test of the design of coordination among state institutions as regulated by law [11]. If forest degradation remains high or recurs in certain regions even though the legal framework appears comprehensive, this indicates problems in implementation, weaknesses in oversight, or an ineffective coordination design. These findings are then further examined normatively to formulate the necessary improvements.

To maintain the validity and reliability of the research results, source triangulation is carried out by comparing legislation, scholarly literature, and official reports of state institutions. Where discrepancies in data or assessments are found, the study clarifies them by tracing additional sources or providing theoretical explanations for these differences. This approach ensures that the analysis remains systematic, logical, and academically defensible.

With such a methodological construction, the research is expected to produce a study that is not only doctrinally robust, but also practically relevant for policy formulation and institutional reform. The normative juridical method, combined with the statute and conceptual approaches, enables the researcher to construct coherent arguments grounded in well-established theories while remaining sensitive to the actual realities of deforestation in Indonesia. Ultimately, this method becomes the foundation for formulating prescriptive recommendations on strengthening the coordination of state institutions in tackling deforestation.

3 Research Results and Discussion

Forest governance in Indonesia is structured within a highly complex framework, as it involves numerous state actors with different mandates. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) holds a central role in the regulation of forest areas, while regional governments possess authority over licensing and spatial planning in the post-decentralization era. At the same time, the Peatland and Mangrove Restoration Agency (BRGM) is given a specific mandate for the restoration of peatland and mangrove ecosystems, whereas the police, the prosecution service, and the courts hold law enforcement authority. Theoretically, this multi-actor institutional arrangement should be able to establish a strong system of checks and balances to prevent deforestation [12].

However, in practice, this institutional diversity often gives rise to fragmented authority and sectoral egos. Each institution operates on the basis of its own sectoral regulations and performance indicators, so inter-agency coordination tends to be ad hoc and reactive rather than strategically planned. From a governance perspective, when coordination is not clearly institutionalized, a complex institutional network will produce overlapping policies and

gray areas of accountability. This condition then becomes one of the factors that makes deforestation difficult to control in a systematic manner [13].

Decentralization adds a new dimension to the complexity of forest governance. Regional governments, particularly regents and governors, have political and economic incentives to attract investment through the issuance of permits for plantations, mining, and land use. On the other hand, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) is obliged to safeguard the sustainability of forest areas and curb the rate of degradation through mechanisms of area designation, supervision, and administrative sanctions. This tension between policy logics on the one hand increasing local revenue, and on the other protecting the environment gives rise to recurring conflicts of authority over time.

These conflicts of authority have a direct impact on weak oversight in the field. When violations occur, it is often unclear who should act first or bear primary responsibility: local governments as licensing authorities, KLHK as the forestry mandate holder, or law enforcement agencies that wait for formal reports. This ambiguity creates opportunities for business actors to exploit regulatory loopholes, for instance by claiming that their actions are "in accordance with permits," even though those permits clearly contradict principles of environmental sustainability.

Within a democratic governance framework, public participation should serve as an important channel for correcting and overseeing policies that have the potential to damage forests. However, the findings of Suryani et al. show that weak public participation in environmental decision-making is caused by limited access to information, a lack of transparency in licensing, and structural barriers in consultation mechanisms. Local communities and civil society organizations often struggle to obtain data on area status, concession maps, or environmental impact assessment documents that ought to be publicly accessible.

These limitations in participation have a direct impact on the declining quality of forest governance. The theory of deliberative democracy emphasizes that sound public decisions require open dialogue, the exchange of rational arguments, and equal opportunities to voice interests. When communities lack sufficient information and effective channels of participation, forestry policies tend to be dominated by economic and political elites. It is in this context that environmental democracy experiences a setback, and the space to correct pro-deforestation policies becomes extremely narrow [14].

Large-scale deforestation then gives rise to tangible, long-term ecological consequences. Flash floods, landslides, droughts, forest fires, and the loss of biodiversity are concrete manifestations of damaged forest cover. Ansar emphasizes that many ecological disasters in Indonesia are not merely "natural disasters," but the result of a series of logging and land-clearing permit decisions made without adequate risk analysis. In other words, these are disasters produced by policy.

This situation shows that environmental impact assessment instruments often function only as a formality. The precautionary principle, which should serve as the foundation for every land-use decision, is frequently overridden by the logic of accelerating investment. The Environmental Impact Assessment (AMDAL) process, which ideally should be the main filter for rejecting high-risk business plans, is in practice not infrequently used to legitimize projects that were effectively predetermined from the outset. This indicates a gap between progressive legal norms and implementation practices that remain highly accommodating of short-term interests.

In the realm of environmental law enforcement, various structural obstacles mean that many cases of deforestation and forest burning do not result in proportionate sanctions. Corruption and oligarchic dominance in the natural resource sector undermine the integrity of the law-enforcement chain from investigation through trial. Law enforcement officials are placed in a difficult position when the violators are large corporations with strong networks among local and national elites. As a result, enforcement tends to be selective and fails to create a deterrent effect.

Limitations in environmental forensic support also constitute a significant technical constraint. Proving cases of forest fires, for example, requires scientific data on the point of origin of the fire, patterns of spread, weather conditions, and causal links with land-management practices. Without strong environmental laboratories and independent expert teams, evidentiary processes are often deemed weak in court. This is precisely where technical coordination between KLHK, the police, the prosecution service, and research institutions should play a crucial role, yet in practice such coordination has not been systematically established.

The absence of an independent body specifically tasked with handling environmental crimes makes law enforcement highly dependent on the dynamics of executive agencies and general law-enforcement institutions. KLHK, the police, and the prosecution service each have their own agendas, workloads, and priorities that do not always align. In some regions, cases of illegal logging or unlawful land clearing are discontinued not because no violations occurred, but due to local political pressure, economic compromise, or other pragmatic considerations. Such patterns show that environmental law enforcement is still not supported by an institutional structure that is truly independent.

The situation in Papua sharply illustrates how deforestation is linked to non-inclusive agrarian policies. Wea notes that many land-control policies in Papua have been formulated without meaningful involvement of indigenous communities. Customary lands (tanah ulayat), which have been managed for generations on the basis of local wisdom, are converted into large-scale concessions without mechanisms for free, prior, and informed consent. Within such a construction, deforestation signifies not only the loss of trees, but also the loss of living space, cultural identity, and the sovereignty of indigenous communities over their territories.

Papua also illustrates the state's failure to manage legal pluralism. On the one hand, national law recognizes the existence of indigenous peoples and customary land rights; on the other hand, licensing procedures and investment policies often disregard customary decision-making mechanisms. When customary institutions, local governments, and KLHK are not integrated within a clear coordination framework, conflicts of interest between corporations and indigenous communities become difficult to resolve fairly. In the context of political ecology, this situation reflects how political and economic power marginalize local knowledge and claims to land rights.

The experience of Kalimantan reveals another dimension of deforestation driven by commodity expansion. Oil palm plantations have become the main driver of changes in forest cover, with many business permits issued by district governments in pursuit of regional economic growth. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) then finds itself in a defensive position, attempting to maintain or restore forest areas through various policy instruments [15]. The tension between central and regional authorities, which is not bound by strong coordination mechanisms, renders the enforcement of area boundaries and the imposition of sanctions for violations weak.

In Kalimantan, sharp criticism is also directed at the phenomenon of corporate impunity in large-scale forest clearing and land fires. Various reports by environmental organizations show that although damage occurs on a massive scale, only a small number of cases result in significant criminal or civil sanctions. Many cases stop at the administrative level or are resolved through non-litigation mechanisms that are not commensurate with the ecological damage caused. This pattern reinforces the impression that, in the absence of a firm institutional design, coordination among state institutions will always be outmatched by the power of organized economic networks.

In Sumatra, deforestation is driven by a combination of land clearing for Industrial Timber Plantations, encroachment into national parks, and recurring annual forest fires. BRGM, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), and regional governments in fact have mutually complementary mandates in peatland restoration and fire prevention. However, without solid coordination and a shared policy vision, restoration programs often run in a partial manner and fail to address the root of the problem. Meanwhile, long-established corporate networks controlling peatlands continue practices that carry a high risk of fire.

The experience in Sumatra shows that reforestation and restoration programs will not be effective if they are approached merely as technical projects. A reordering of permits, consistent law enforcement, and the involvement of local communities as land-management partners are required. When BRGM, KLHK, and regional governments work on the basis of different datasets, success indicators, and priorities, the result is unsynchronized policies whose effectiveness is difficult to measure comprehensively. Once again, the root of the problem lies in the absence of a robust institutional coordination design.

When the three cases in Papua, Kalimantan, and Sumatra are read comparatively, a recurring pattern becomes visible: weak cross-institutional coordination, the dominance of corporate interests, and minimal substantive recognition of the rights of indigenous and local communities. From an institutional theory perspective, this situation reflects path dependency, in which institutional structures long shaped to serve extractive interests continue to be reproduced, even as the discourse of ecological sustainability grows stronger. Without serious institutional intervention, patterns of deforestation will continue to recur, with varying actors and policy instruments [16].

Building on this reality, the idea of the importance of an independent institution in environmental law enforcement becomes highly relevant. Karyono emphasizes that within a constitutional system, independent bodies are needed to oversee government policies so that they are not easily co-opted by particular political or economic interests. In environmental matters, such an institution would function as a watchdog that is not bound by the interests of technical ministries or short-term electoral political dynamics. This position enables an independent body to act on the basis of legal considerations, scientific knowledge, and the long-term public interest.

An independent institution in the environmental field can become a key pillar in strengthening checks and balances in natural resource governance. It can prevent conflicts of interest between the government as the licensing authority and the government as the party that is supposed to sanction violations. With the power to oversee policies, conduct investigations, and propose sanction recommendations, this institution can serve as a structural counterweight to pro-investment tendencies that often neglect ecological sustainability. Thus, the existence of an independent body is not merely an additional institution, but a reform of the very architecture of power.

The experience of other countries provides important illustrations of the benefits of independent institutions in addressing environmental crimes. In several jurisdictions, public prosecutors' offices or environmental commissions are given a special mandate to investigate ecological violations, so that major cases do not depend solely on the political will of the incumbent government. Such structures position environmental violations as serious crimes affecting the public interest, rather than merely administrative infractions. Indonesia can learn from these models to design institutions suited to its own constitutional context.

Within the framework of governance reform, a more ideal and operational model of cross-institutional coordination among state bodies is needed. Such a model cannot be limited to coordination forums, but must be institutionalized in the form of a structure with clear authority, a firm mandate, and adequate resource support. Coordination must cover the entire policy cycle, from spatial planning, permit issuance, and supervision to law enforcement and ecosystem restoration. With such a design, coordination will no longer be reactive only when disasters occur, but preventive and systemic.

One idea that can be developed is the establishment of an Environmental Law Enforcement Coordination Council composed of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK), the police, the prosecution service, the Peatland and Mangrove Restoration Agency (BRGM), the Audit Board of Indonesia (BPK), the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), representatives of regional governments, and representatives of indigenous communities. This council should have the authority to formulate cross-sectoral forest restoration policies, coordinate investigations involving multiple institutions, impose centralized administrative sanctions, and oversee the issuance and evaluation of forestry business permits. With such powers, the council can become the center of gravity for coordination, which has thus far been dispersed and weak.

To support the work of this council, the development of an integrated forestry data system becomes imperative. A Forest Integrated Data System that brings together licensing data, area maps, hotspot locations, law-enforcement cases, and restoration programs will create a shared information base for all parties. A system that is transparent and accessible to the public will also minimize opportunities for data manipulation for particular interests. In the digital era, data integration is no longer merely a technical option, but a foundation for transparent and accountable forest governance.

Beyond the formal structures of the state, strengthening the role of indigenous peoples and civil society in forest monitoring must be an integral part of the ideal coordination model. Communities living around forests possess local knowledge, direct interests, and observational capacities that the bureaucracy does not have. The "forest guardians" model, which involves local communities as forest stewards, shows that their engagement can improve the effectiveness of early detection of violations and strengthen the legitimacy of policies. For this reason, legal recognition of customary territories and clear mechanisms for official reporting from communities to state institutions need to be carefully designed [11].

As a complement, the establishment of an independent body such as an Environment Integrity Commission (EIC) could serve as an institutional innovation focused on prosecuting environmental crimes. The EIC is designed to stand outside the ministerial structure, with the authority to conduct investigations, collect evidence, coordinate with law enforcement agencies, and push legal proceedings against perpetrators of environmental crimes, especially corporations. With its independent position, the EIC can work in tandem with the Environmental Law Enforcement Coordination Council: the former ensuring the integrity of law enforcement, the latter ensuring the integration of policy.

Through a combination of improved cross-institutional coordination, integration of forestry data, strengthened roles for indigenous peoples and civil society, and the establishment of an independent environmental law enforcement body, Indonesia has an opportunity to escape the trap of fragile forest governance. Deforestation will not cease merely through moral appeals or short-term technical programs; it requires serious institutional engineering grounded in well-established governance theory. This discussion shows that the core of the problem lies in how the state organizes and supervises itself in managing forests, so that ecological sustainability and social justice can truly serve as the foundation of every decision taken.

4 Conclusion

Deforestation in Indonesia is essentially a symptom of state governance failure, not merely a consequence of economic expansion or a "natural disaster." Overlapping authority and weak coordination between central and regional governments render forest protection policies ineffective at the implementation level. The dominance of oligarchic interests in the natural resource sector, limited access to information, and restricted public participation make licensing and forest oversight processes opaque and vulnerable to compromised interests. The absence of an

independent environmental oversight body results in selective law enforcement, allowing corporations to frequently escape dissuasive sanctions. Therefore, reform of institutional coordination through the establishment of a cross-agency coordinating council with a clear mandate over policy, supervision, and environmental law enforcement is urgently needed. Strengthening indigenous peoples and local communities as primary forest watchdogs, accompanied by the recognition of customary land rights (hak ulayat) and formal participation channels, is crucial to reversing long-standing asymmetrical power relations. The development of an integrated, transparent, and publicly accessible forestry data system is a prerequisite for preventing information manipulation and strengthening evidentiary processes. The establishment of an independent environmental oversight institution is needed to reinforce checks and balances and to insulate the handling of ecological crimes from short-term political and economic pressures. Without such reforms, forest degradation will continue to recur, eroding biodiversity and exacerbating ecological disasters. Ultimately, the failure to improve forest governance will threaten national ecological sustainability and undermine intergenerational justice.

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