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M' SIA CRITICISES UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 12 (Bernama) -- Malaysia today slammed the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) for its failure to implement the non-binding principles of the Earth Summit.

"Malaysia will question the UNSCD on what they have done since 1992; where are the plans and funds to ensure the success of the sustainable tropical forest management proposed at the Earth Summit," Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said.

At the upcoming forestry summit in April 1997, Malaysia would also push for a convention on forestry to implement the non-binding principles of the Earth Summit, he added.

"Wait and see how many countries would oppose the proposal," he told reporters after opening the two-day Forest Management Certificate Workshop at the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) in Kepong, near here.

Dr Lim said Malaysia would spend RM1.2 billion up till the year 2000 to comply with the guidelines and criteria set by the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO).

Dr Lim also said attacks on tropical forest logging in Malaysia had toned down but the foreign environmental groups were now targetting Malaysian logging companies abroad.

"When our loggers go to Papua New Guinea, they are criticised by Australian NGOs; they go to Surinam, it is the European NGOs, Brazil by US NGOs and in African countries, by all the NGOs without any facts," he added.

He said the foreign NGOs were used as "mad dogs" by foreign logging companies to "bark" at Malaysian logging companies who have become more efficient and competitive than those from the developed countries.

Malaysian and Asian loggers have learned the trade and were moving into the "playground" previously dominated by the Australians, Europeans and Americans, he added.

Accusing the NGOs of practicing double standards, he cited as example the NGO silence over French logging operations in Gabon. "The moment a Malaysian company enters their turf, the NGOs hurl accusations," he said.

The French had been in Gabon for 50 years, carting the best logs back to France without any downstream processing, he added.

He said when a Malaysian company goes there, the NGOs say: "You must have downstream processing plants, you must be sustainable and cannot export logs."

Dr Lim also corrected an Asian Wall Street Journal Nov 11 report that a Malaysian company was logging 11 million acres (27.5 million hectares) in Brazil.

"We have not even started any work there and it is not 11 million acres," he said.

The Sarawak-based Malaysian company, WTK Enterprise, had yet to start logging on its 300,000-hectare forest holding it bought from the Brazilian authorities as it was still awaiting approval of its management plan, he added.

He also said the Cabinet had decided that Malaysian timber companies involved in logging overseas should adopt sustainable forest management even if there were no such rules in the host country.

"They must practice Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's vision of prosper thy neighbour and become good citizens in the host

country," he added.

He said Malaysia would adopt sustainable forestry management practices because it paid for the country to do so since "we want to export timber for ever and ever." -- BERNAMA

JSM LDB