

News | Environment

Forest recognition for Papua tribe raises hopes for climate

Indigenous peoples are increasingly recognised as the most effective custodians of the world's remaining forests.



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East Bintuni Regency, Indonesia – Striding barefoot through the emerald green jungle with a long wooden bow slung over his shoulder, Josep Ogoney points up at the tropical vegetation surrounding him and his remote riverside village.

“This is my *pasar*,” said the 37-year-old, using the Indonesian word for a market. “I can take animals to eat, plants for medicine and wood to build my home.”

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But this stretch of pristine rainforest is rather different from conventional markets.

“It’s all free,” grinned Josep, who is a member of the Ogoney, an Indigenous clan

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“We depend on the forest,” adds Josep. “We will reject anyone who tries to exploit it.”



Josep Ogoney says the forest is like a ‘market’ for the Ogoney people, but they also consider much of it sacred and are fiercely protective of it [Peter Yeung/Al Jazeera]

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“By using sustainable practices taught from one generation to another, they actively safeguard forests, preserving biodiversity and keeping a delicate balance essential for both the environment and their own sustenance,” said Emmanuelle Bérenger, lead for sustainable forest management at the Rainforest Alliance, a global nonprofit. “To effectively protect forests, they need to be supported through legal recognition.”



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Long process

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