

Chairman of Indonesian Disaster Experts Association: Ad-Hoc Agency Needed to Overcome Forest Fires

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The current forest and land fires due to the uncontrolled land burning are predicted to be the biggest in the past two decades. These are even bigger than the fires caused by El Nino back in 1997 as it had affected 3.9 millions of hectares of agriculture land with a loss totalling US\$466 millions. The current fires hit 11.6 millions of hectares with a total loss amounting US\$2.75 billions.

Chairman of Association of Indonesian Disaster Experts (IABI) as well as Chairman of Disaster Management Magister UGM, Prof. Dr. HA Sudibyakto, MS., assessed the forest fires and haze had greatly impacted the economy. To overcome the problem, Sudibyakto proposed the formation of an ad-hoc super body to overcome the fires problem and sanction those responsible firmly. "Up to this day, there has been lack of coordination, unclear authority, and weak controlling from authorities," said Sudibyakto to reporters at UGM on Monday (19/10).

According to Sudibyakto, the government has to establish a firm law and make forest and land good governance. On the other hand, the local governments have to look into detail and be wise in giving land permits. "Land permits have to be issued based on capacity and environment supporting standards that are existing in the regions," he said.

The local governments are also expected to get involved in empowering community-based efforts for conservation of forest and environment. Communities can be empowered to build canals around the forest, to grow and protect plant species that can collect water as well as monitoring corporate behaviours.

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