

President Joko Widodo Meets UGM Peatlands Working Group

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President Joko Widodo officially received a working team on peatlands from Universitas Gadjah Mada on Tuesday (3/11) in the Presidential office in Jakarta. In the meeting the President has asked them to manage peatlands well across Indonesia.

Rector of UGM, Prof. Ir. Dwikorita Karnawati, M.Sc., presented to the President researches in peatlands made since 1974. "Following our findings, we presented a measure to address the problem or to prevent peatland fires in the future," she said.


The Rector submitted the need for integration of aspects, including social and technical engineering, and economic development politics in land concession and plantation.

"Those three aspects needs to be controlled under the legal aspect, or even law enactment and regulatory adjustments," said Dwikorita.

UGM lecturer in agriculture who is also a peatland expert, Prof. Dr. Ir. Azwar Ma'as, said peats grow in swamps usually in tropical regions. The peat is remainders of rainforest trees but that did not decay completely due to water submergence.

"After a long period of time, the remainders accumulated. This is what we know as peat. It has a dome that has a huge supply of water," he said.

To save peatlands from a fire, Azwar said the only way was to return the function of the dome.



Peatlands have adequate supplies of water for the dry season. “After the dome is secured, just don’t let channels underneath get connected directly to rivers,” he said.

UGM Forestry lecturer, Oka Karyanto, said the President had asked them to make a detailed mapping of all peatlands across the country so that channel partitions and water restoration can be done in the next few months.

Technically speaking, the UGM Working Group has paid attention to water management. Currently, peatlands suffer from over-drainage, hence prone to flames. An immediate act to take is to restore the channels based on topography.

On social aspect, the Working Group recommended that the President devise a social engineering scenario to ban forests, particularly when opening new lands. Socio-cultural mapping is required in advance in line with the condition and requirement of the local people.

In terms of economy, the Working Group recommended an economic policy based on agrobusiness. The peatlands ought to be grown with adaptable plants, also the conservation zones to be restored.

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