

Forest Fire Needs to Be Addressed in Southeast Asian Perspective

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In 2016, World Bank has released data of economic loss due to the forest fires in 2015 which reached IDR220 trillion as well as 47 million of people getting exposed to smokes in Kalimantan and Sumatera, while claiming 19 lives. Neighbouring countries -Singapore and Indonesia - also become impacted.

Against this background, the Centre for Southeast Asian Social Studies of Universitas Gadjah Mada held a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) titled *Strategic Policy in Preventing Peatland Fires in Indonesia* in cooperation with the Office of Co-ordinating Minister for Human Development and Culture and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung on Tuesday (1/11) in Jogjakarta Plaza Hotel.

"Forest fire disaster not only affects Indonesia, but also neighbouring countries. The forest fire really calls for in-depth discussion, a regional perspective is required to address this issue instead of only national one," said Deputy Head for Social Vulnerabilities and Impacts of Disaster from the Office, Masmun Yan Mangesa, SE., M.BA.

Meanwhile, Head of the UGM Centre, Dr. Phil. Hermin Indah Wahyuni, M.Si., said, "It is expected

that through this FGD, an understanding can be built to determine the strategic policy for human and culture development in provinces that have peatlands vulnerable to fires.” This is important, said Hermin, because policy changes in development for peatlands call for a comprehensive social engineering whilst considering the social, economic and environmental aspects, for the realisation of sustainable development.

Educational staff from Soil Department of Agriculture Faculty UGM - also Chairman of Experts for Peatland Restoration Agency, Prof. Dr. Ir. Azwar Maas, introduced the software Early Warning System for Peatland Fire to detect the peatland condition based on observable biophysics, “This programme can be used by anyone everywhere. I hope this programme would be able to help identify the peatland conditions and early handling before a forest fire broke,” he said.

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