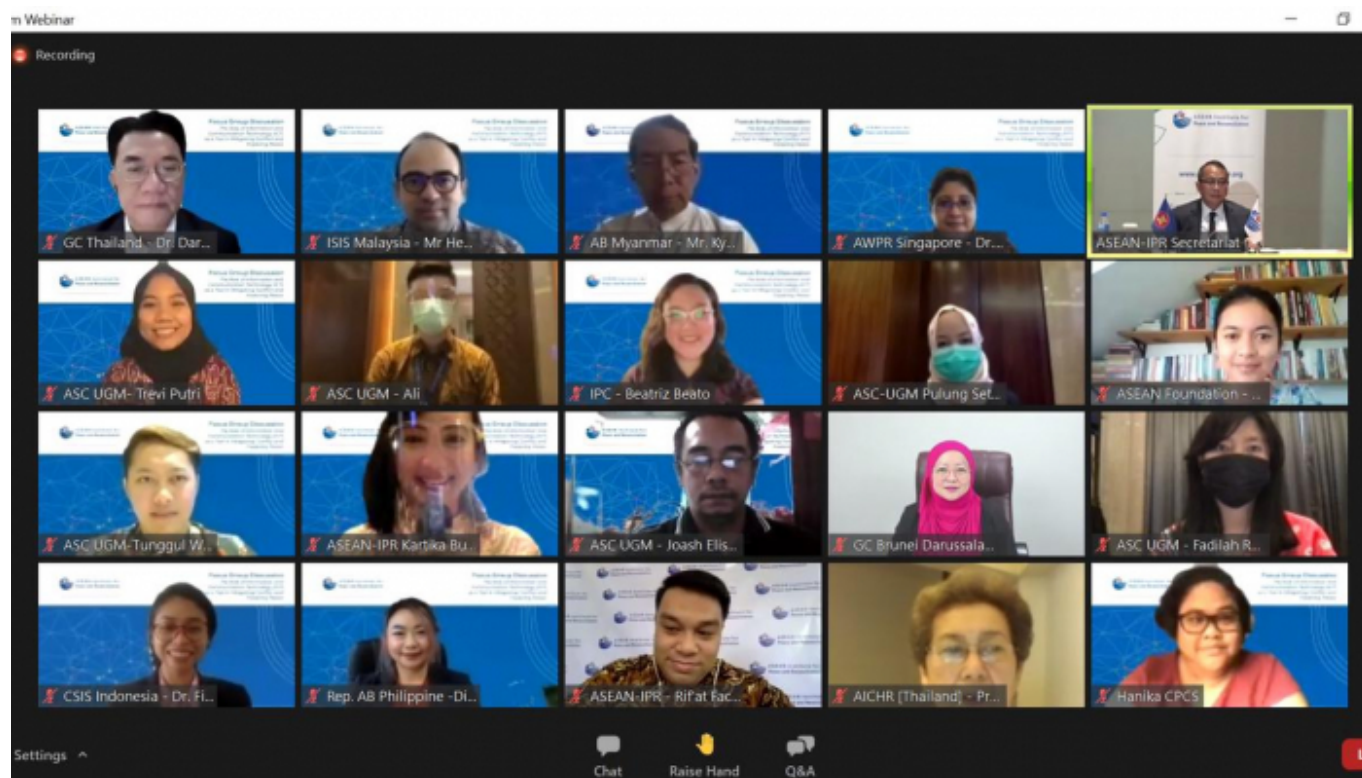


UGM ASEAN Studies Center and ASEAN-IPR Evaluate the Role of Digital Media in Upholding Peace

Wednesday, 27 January 2021 WIB, By: Natasa Adelayanti




UGM ASEAN Studies Center Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, in collaboration with the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR), organized a Focus Group Discussion entitled "The Role of ICT as a Tool in Mitigating Conflict and Fostering Peace", Monday (25/1).

Several researchers and social media influencers engaged in the discussion forum that was held both offline and online. One of the topics discussed the role of key opinion leaders in social media, or generally known as influencers, as a way to mitigate conflicts and establish peace and how the state cooperates with them.

"Not only provide information, like their names, but influencers also ought to give claims about the truth," said Joash Elisha Stephen Tapiheru, M.A., as UGM Researcher at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences.

She said that social media influencers play an important role in conflict and peace endeavors in the digital era. Joash also explained that influencers' occurrence in the realm of social media itself is interrelated with the audience. A person can be an influencer because they have an audience.



She then further explained that there had been a significant leap in the development of information and communication technology in the last ten years.

This leap not only facilitates human behavior but also changes the way humans communicate and perceive communication, including how they explore alternative truths and its source.

"At present, there is a term called an ideological death. We are undergoing a situation where we have alternative sources of truth," she said.

Ernest Prakasa, a filmmaker who was also one of the discussion panelists, added that collaboration between the government and social media influencers, for instance, a campaign related to the Covid-19 vaccine, was considered a good thing because the community no longer has trust in conventional media.

"Community has more trust in the people they follow on social media," she added.


Nevertheless, according to her, some considerations are necessary for selecting influencers to be engaged in public communication efforts. Not only the number of followers, but integrity, track records, values, and their current strategy in influencing are also important as considerations.

"The government ought to be serious in understanding strategies on how to maximize the role of influencers in terms of marketing," she explained.

On the other hand, there was also a discussion topic regarding the use of communication and information technology in dealing with fake news and disinformation in the context of domestic or regional conflicts.

Dr. Darmip Sukontasap, who became the discussion pioneer, explained that fake news could spread ten times faster than correct news. There is a high tendency among the public to consume news that is not yet clear.

According to her, in order to surmount this problem and other negative impacts of technological developments such as cybercrime, it is necessary to create a combination of good regulation and education for children.



"There is no regulation that is rapid enough to follow up the pace of information technology development. Accordingly, we need to provide education and empowerment for children, and we must start it from now on," she said.

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