



Expert Meeting and High-Level Policy Dialogue Finding and Mainstreaming Long-term Solutions to Fire and Haze in Indonesia

IPB International Convention Center, Bogor, 25 August 2015
Mangala Wanabakti, Jakarta, 26 August 2015

Recommendations from the Expert Meeting on Finding and Mainstreaming Long-term Solutions for Fire and Haze in Indonesia

(Bogor, 25 August 2015)

In Indonesia, fires cause major damage to forests, crops and plantations and produce large GHG emissions. The resulting haze crosses borders, negatively affecting human health, transport, tourism, economic activity throughout ASEAN countries. In Riau alone, the economic losses from the 2013 and 2014 fires reached an estimated US\$2 billion due to declining tourism, airport closures, and associated health costs.

El Niño years are characterized by less rainfall, and thus higher fire risk. All major Indonesian fire events between 1960 and 2006 occurred during El Niño years. And 2015 is an El Niño year. As early as September, we may witness mega-forest fires on both peat and mineral soils that have the potential to reach the magnitude of damage caused in 1997–98.

Yet, while emergency measures may be necessary in 2015, recent fire events in 2013 and 2014 have shown that fire and haze are growing more frequent – and indeed may continue to occur every year. In Riau province, which did not experience many fires in 1997–98, research by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) found that most fires in 2013 and 2014 occurred on deforested peatlands that were lying idle, awaiting oil palm plantation. And although planted land is generally less prone to fire it is not immune: more than 25% of plantations bordering degraded peatlands were destroyed by the 2013 and 2014 fires. Their subsequent abandonment by landowners creates a negative feedback cycle from which burned lands remain degraded.

The key to fire and haze prevention in Indonesia centers on the question of what to do with peatlands: both fire-resistant peat-swamp forests and fire-prone deforested peatlands. **Deforestation and draining of Indonesian peatlands are the immediate causes of fires, but we cannot ignore the underlying drivers: unclear spatial planning and unenforced land rights, and a strong demand for degraded and/or burnt land created by illegal land markets and organized crime. We need long-term solutions to fire prevention.**

The expert meeting held on 25 August, 2015 focused on shifting the emphasis from fire-fighting to fire prevention. Participants agreed on a long-term vision in which degraded peatlands are restored to their original forested state and hydrological equilibrium; where corruption in the system of land allocation has been eradicated and the demand for illegal degraded, burnt and oil palm planted lands are eliminated; where fire risk is greatly reduced through incentives/disincentives and establishing clear, enforceable land rights; and where people are aware of the value of peat ecosystems.

This summary outlines three sets of recommendations: emergency actions to reduce the potential impact of El Niño-induced fires in the coming months; and short- and medium-term actions that will lead to a long-term Integrated Fire Management system and healthy peatlands.

El Nino 2015: Recommended Emergency Actions

1. Establish an Emergency Task Force to address the immediate fire risks. Ideally, this Task Force would evolve into a designated official Multi-level Coordinating Committee (details below).
2. Mobilize military resources for fire suppression; call for international support if necessary; and impose temporary fire bans (on all types of fire) in fire-prone districts effective immediately through to November (or February for certain districts); raise awareness of health risks of haze among vulnerable populations.
3. Ask companies to pledge not to buy commodities produced on land burned as of now (end August 2015), as a way of supporting local temporary fire bans.

Short-term recommendations

- **Allocate a large national budget towards fire prevention.** Currently 95% of the national budget is dedicated to fire-fighting and fire preparedness, whereas the recommended norm for International Fire Management (IFM) is 89% on fire *prevention*.
 - Currently there are no dedicated Fire Prevention Officers at any level in Indonesia; the budget should provide for such dedicated officers, as well as for training in fire prevention and suppression at all levels
 - Ensure that the Emergency Task Force evolves into a Multilevel Coordinating Committee, with representatives from key land management agencies, including: MOEF; MOA; MOHA; BNPB; Public Works; Agrarian and Spatial Planning.
 - Strengthen financial support to grassroots organizations like Fire Concerned Communities (*Masyarakat Peduli Api*) to support fire detection and early warning systems; integrate their activities into a long-term cross-sectoral IFM system.
 - Consider current institutional arrangements to revitalize the National Standard Operating Procedure on the Prevention of Forest and Land Fires (POSNAS), in order to realize the full potential of the tool and to sustainably mitigate fire risk in both the short and long-term. It should include guidelines on early warning, and fire prevention and suppression at the local level; adopt the Incident Command System (ICS)¹, a standardized approach to the command, control, and coordination of emergency response.
- **Allocate a large national budget towards peatland restoration**, for example, from reforestation funds and the *Tarif Layanan Badan Layanan Umum Badan Pengelola Dana Perkebunan Kelapa Sawit* (BLU CPO fund).
- **Disseminate and multiply good practices** of local initiatives and large private sectors in peat ecosystem restoration. Ensure that funds allocated are used for best practices and local initiatives.
- **Immediately revoke concessions on undeveloped forested (primary or secondary) peatlands** and on active concessions on peat domes or deep peat >3 m (unless those are already under *Restorasi Ekosistem* license).
- **Make detailed concession maps publicly available.**
- **Invest more in fire detection systems and technology** to: 1) assist law enforcement measures against non-compliant companies, and bring evidence of burning to court, and 2) to help local communities in early warning and risk mapping to suppress fire before it spreads (e.g. SMS warning of fire presence to local communities).
- **Strengthen enforcement capacity** by providing trainings to police, attorneys and judges on related forest and environmental law execution to detect and prosecute organized crimes that involve in illegal land transactions leading to fire and haze.
- **Include peat land into the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs)** commitment and develop mechanisms to implement these.

¹ <http://www.fema.gov/incident-command-system-resources>

Medium-term recommendations

- **Continue process of harmonizing spatial plans** between local and central government, including addressing customary and peatland issues to realize the One Map vision.

Question: *How will the planned Joint Forestry Task Force address fire prevention, preparedness, response and restoration?*

- Make sure that the **regulations on peatland protection are clear and unambiguous**; close up loopholes in current legislation (*Peraturan Pemerintah*). Develop a coherent and evidence-based peat legal framework that aims to reduce emissions and increase sustainable use. Start a dialogue with land actors to transition out of the peat.
- **Hold regular compliance audits** of plantation companies operating on peatlands and districts and Forest Management Units.
- **Provide incentives to plantation companies, districts, sub-districts and villages** to engage in peatland restoration (canal blocking, filling peat dome restoration).
- **Initiate the development of immediate livelihoods and income sources** for indigenous and local communities in already **degraded land** with annual crops, horticulture, agro-forestry and planted trees (depending the peat depths and their related small-scale industries along their value chains). Develop immediate livelihoods and income sources for indigenous and local communities in good peat land with PES and REDD+.
- **Initiate collective actions among ASEAN country members** to reduce fire and haze through continuous dialogue, pooling funding and concrete actions on the ground.
- Initiate research and development activities to **identify, research and develop alternative crops** which have the ability to produce under waterlogged circumstances.
- **Continue public awareness-raising** through mass and social media on the importance of reducing fire and haze.
- **Identify international sources of finance** for the mass-restoration of peatlands.



UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



UNORCID
United Nations Office for REDD+ Coordination in Indonesia