

Dire Consequences of Ignoring Climate Change

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CLIMATE change is real and happening this very moment. Being one of the countries that will be greatly affected, Indonesia needs to get her act together to confront this clear and present danger.

This year, the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) released its three important working group reports. The reports clearly signaled that: "there are no doubts over the reality of climate change, declaring the proof to be 'unequivocal'; the scale and speed of adverse impacts on humans and their livelihoods and on unique ecosystems are enormous; and avoiding dangerous climate change is technologically and economically possible but the time left to act is short'".

Using the IPCC model, Indonesia will experience an increase in the average

temperature of 0.1 to 0.3 °C per decade. The increase in temperature will subsequently affect the climate and result in adverse repercussions on human and surrounding ecosystems, such as the rising levels of sea water and greater intensity and increase in the frequency of rainfall, tropical storms, and drought.

Due to the higher sea water level rise of 8-30 cm, as an archipelagic country, Indonesia could lose up to 2,000 islands. This would lead to a shift of the country's boundaries and affect the security of the nation. As mentioned in the WGII (working group II) report of IPCC, it would also displace 30 million refugees world-wide and with most people living in the coastal areas, Indonesia will suffer the most.

In terms of rainfall, there is a prediction that the country could experience an increase in both the intensity and frequency of rainfall. This would shift the beginning of the wet and dry seasons, which will have a negative impact on the production of rice in Java and Bali, causing a decrease in production by 7-18%.

The change of climate patterns would also add to the already existing hazards,

including floods, land-slides drought and tropical storms. According to the Indonesian National Coordinating Board for Disaster Management, in 2003-05 alone climate-hydrological related disasters reached 1,429 cases or 53.3% of the overall disasters happening in Indonesia.

On the other hand, when the dry season hits, the country could also face the possibility of prolonged drought and, in some areas where forest and land fires are still obvious problems, the probability of them occurring will be even higher. In just the one month of September 2006, there were 26,561 hot spots: the highest since August 1997 when 37,938 cases were counted.

The challenge for Indonesia now is to have the appropriate and effective response mechanism to address the issue of climate change. Both national and local action is needed in parallel with international initiatives.

As a party that has ratified the UN Framework Convention on Climate

An island across Krakatau, an active volcano on the Sunda Straits, West Java.



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Change (UNFCCC) in 1994 and the Kyoto Protocol in 2004, through the issuance of Law number 17/2004, Indonesia has taken some steps towards addressing this issue.

A good example of this is the development of a national institution to manage a Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) which, if utilised effectively, will enable the country to reduce greenhouse gases emission of CO₂ up to 23-24 million tonnes per annum (based on the national strategic study of 2001/02 to analyse the potential of emission reduction from the energy and forestry sectors).

Indonesia, however, still needs to further develop a firmer stance and take stronger action in several major areas. There is as yet no national comprehensive strategy, in accordance with the UNFCCC, to anticipate the adverse impact of climate change.

As one of the most vulnerable countries, Indonesia needs to do vulnerability and adaptation assessment and mapping in order to cope with the impact properly. This would help the country to identify priority areas, communities and sectors for adaptation strategy, planning and implementation.

Subsequently, there is an urgent need to mainstream the adaptation strategy

into the national and sectoral development strategies and planning. Without this, Indonesia will develop its areas and people with the risk of developmental failures due to environmental disasters.

On the mitigation part, Indonesia needs to urge industrialized countries to cut their emission further if the global community wants to maintain the level of the increase in temperature up to 2 °C only, which will result in an impact level which can still be dealt with.

As written in the report of IPCC WGIII, to stay in the lowest CO₂ emission ppm range by 2030, the maximum cost is 0.12% of GDP while the estimated total cost is some 3%. In his review, Sir Nicholas Stern warned that the cost of inaction is estimated to be at 5-20% by 2050, by far a greater amount.

As for Indonesia, the country's contribution to the global level of greenhouse gases emission is gradually becoming greater, especially if emission from deforestation including peat land conversion and forest and land fires are taken into account. Some organizations believe that Indonesia is already the third largest emitter in the world if these are factored in.

There is nevertheless a window of opportunity for Indonesia and other forest-

Islands under threat in Maluku, Indonesia.

ed countries to make a positive contribution to efforts in reducing emission from deforestation. The UNFCCC at its Conference in Bali this December is planning to hold formal negotiations to develop a mechanism in providing positive incentives with appropriate policy approaches for REDD - reducing emission from deforestation in developing countries.

Indonesia has a good chance to come up with a strong position and call for the development of the framework of REDD, create policies and measures to reduce and monitor deforestation and improve capacity building. Indonesia also needs to negotiate with different parties to gain support for an initial pilot scheme to address the issue of deforestation and the reduction of emission from deforestation.

If these action steps on adaptation and reducing emission from deforestations can be prepared and implemented seriously, it would send a positive initial signal to the Indonesian people and the world that Indonesia is indeed ready to cope with climate change and its adverse consequences.