

THE POST – ASEAN’S HAZE-FREE ROADMAP 2020 AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE IN INDONESIA’S ENVIRONMENTAL DIPLOMACY: RIAU’S PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The ASEAN’s haze-free roadmap 2020 had the objective to eliminate the regional transboundary haze pollution. However, the 2019 haze recurrence which mostly originated from Indonesia’s land and forest had caused a diplomatic uproar between Indonesian and Malaysian top government officials. In addition, land and forest fires continued to occur in Indonesia over the last 5 years, albeit with a much lower severity compared to 2015, and did not gain global media attention as the haze rarely crossed out of Indonesia’s jurisdiction. This research applies qualitative research method where the data collection is based on semi-structured interviews involving multi-stakeholders in Riau Province. Additional data are also collected from various journals, books, and news from media archival. The finding of this research discloses that several new policies and programs have been created and introduced since the last 5 years provided an early positive start, however, further implementation on the ground has been weak and complicated. Furthermore, previous, current, and future unchanged negligence behavior of government elites and public in Riau towards the land and forest fires has left the post – ASEAN’s haze-free roadmap 2020 with an equal or more amount of homework in the future. Thus, Indonesia needs to pay more attention and work in a sustainable manner on this issue, especially at the local level such as in Riau province and other land and forest fire-prone provinces in order to strengthen Indonesia’s environmental diplomacy bargaining position in the globe and enlighten the current gloomy image in the future.

1. INTRODUCTION

The recurrence of land and forest fires that caused the transboundary haze crisis in 2019 has caused a diplomatic uproar between Indonesia and its affected neighboring country, Malaysia (Ling 2019). Not only causing a diplomatic row between top government officials, but Malaysian residents also brought out their protest (Kheng 2019), this could be a sign of Indonesia’s failure in the perspective of both public and environmental diplomacy. This haze crisis due to the land and forest fires which mostly originates from Indonesia has triggered diplomatic row several times in the previous decade, particularly with Singapore and Malaysia, spanning from the year 2013 to 2019 (Ling 2019; E. Maharani 2013; McBeth 2013; The Straits Times 2015). During the haze crisis coordination meeting in 2019, President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) addressed several top related ministers, police and army

generals, as well as several governors from the haze prone provinces, and expressed his feeling of embarrassment towards the two neighboring countries, Malaysia and Singapore (Gorbiano 2019; H N Jong 2019).

The return of the transboundary haze crisis in 2019 certainly disappointed the President. It is important to note that President Jokowi is the first President in Indonesia's history who was found guilty by the Supreme Court in 2018 related to the land and forest fires event in Central Kalimantan in 2015 (Pahlevi 2018). The president along with his 4 related ministers, Governor, and member of provincial parliament in Central Kalimantan Province did not accept the court decision which punished their negligence to deal with the land and forest fires and request a case review (Gosetti 2019). This case review remains unresolved and unfinished story until now, April 2021. Unfortunately, the land and forest fires event in 2019 had proven again that the government at all levels were truly negligence and this had been recognized by President Jokowi during his visit to Riau Province where he made a statement to the top official government, that "we-Indonesian governments (at all level)-are negligence again" (Rusiana 2019).

It is not only the Supreme Court decision that triggered the President's embarrassment towards Malaysia and Singapore, because the President also once promised during the 2015 transboundary haze crisis, that Indonesia under his administration needed three years to address the haze issue (Varkkey 2017). However, it turned out that a quite serious transboundary haze crisis that crossing Indonesia's jurisdiction kept happening blanketing the two neighboring countries four years later in 2019 (Hunt 2019). Also, the president did make a claim during his second term presidential candidate debate in 2019 that in the last three years (2016-2018) there had been no land and forest fires. The following day, harsh criticism on social media, particularly echoed by environmentalist activist triggered the President to rectify his comment. President Jokowi stated that the haze did happen during those three years but at a very much lower degree, declining more than 85% and no complaint from Malaysia and Singapore (Suciati and Aini 2019), as the haze did not cross Indonesia's jurisdiction nor did it reach Malaysia and Singapore.

To deal with the land and forest fires, compared to the previous administration President Jokowi's administration took a different approach in addressing the transboundary haze crisis issue and the climate change crisis in general. Jokowi believes in inward-looking oriented foreign policy (Situmorang 2015) and result-driven diplomacy (Qin 2019). It is no wonder that he puts more attention on domestic priorities (Rosyidin 2017), and in the context of environmental diplomacy he prioritizes internal consolidation in order to create an impact on bilateral and multilateral negotiation (Robertua and Sigalingging 2019). Although president Jokowi's administration precautionary efforts have been emphasized on domestic approach in handling the land and forest fires, the fires kept raging in the last 5 years and the 2019 haze crisis brought back the memory of 2015 severe land and forest fires.

Against this all backdrop, Riau Province is the gravity center when it comes to the land and forest fires that caused transboundary haze. Riau is one of the closest neighbors to Malaysia's Peninsular and Singapore, and one of the most land and forest fires prone and fire-frequent Province in Indonesia (Alfajri, Setiawan, and Wahyudi 2019; Sizer et al. 2014). Achieving the goal of ASEAN's haze-free 2020 and post – ASEAN's haze-free 2020 should be started by looking at policies, programs, and behaviors of top government officials at the central government and local government levels. The public behavior also contributed to the ongoing land and forest fires in Riau province, and this research also seeks to investigate the behavior of the public towards this unfinished issue.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the subject of International Relations, diplomacy is categorized as an old topic. Massive number of literatures have been written on diplomacy-related themes. Earlier accounts have discussed it with an approach of state-centric due to the dominant nature of states as the sole main actors in international relations particularly during the cold war and prior to the end of the cold war. These earlier accounts also relied upon western-centric perspectives (Bull and Watson 1984; Kaufmann 1988; Watson 1982). Old-style diplomacy was seen as the art of persuasion, negotiation, including dialogue involving equal and sovereign states conducted by a highly trained corps of civil servants/diplomats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) (Blaxekyer 2016; Kaufmann 1988). However, in certain aspects, this image is being questioned and (Blaxekyer 2016) argued that there are at least three arguments to challenge this old image of diplomacy: 1) Diplomacy is sometimes practiced by non-MFA civil servants and non-state actors (Cooper, Heine, and Thakur 2013; Neumann 2002); 2) Diplomacy as a practice actually occurs according to a global pecking order or social domain in a hierarchical form that some diplomats and states are higher than others; and power, in reality, is relational (Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014); 3) According to (Adler-Nissen 2015), there is an ontological gap between the world of diplomats and conventional IR scholarship, so that 'American IR theory now lags behind American diplomatic practice' (Wiseman 2011). The traditional concept of diplomacy has been replaced by hybrid diplomacy, which involves various actors, multiple issues and practices.

After the Second World War and prior to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in 1972, the global economic recovery brought a negative impact on the environment. It caused pollution on rivers, sea, especially the Mediterranean, and other environmental pollution which led to international agreements in the 1950s and 1960s. This dignified activity, however, was not considered a matter of great power politics (Vogler 2008). Then, UNCHE in Stockholm in 1972 was regarded as the emergence moment of environmental diplomacy and it really came into life 20 years later at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. UNCED (1992) also known as the Earth Summit and it was heralded as the largest meeting ever held attended

by heads of state and other non-state actors of almost 180 countries participated (Benedick 1999).

The hybridity of actors, issues, and practices has certainly changed the old understanding of the current concept of diplomacy. However, this change does not necessarily mean to eradicate the state role as the main actor in the realm of International Relations or in particular, environmental diplomacy, at least in the perspectives of realism (neorealism) and liberalism (neo-liberalism), where the state remains the main actors. However, this shifting indicates the salience of diplomacy concept where the state is no longer the only actor in the current setting of global politics, particularly in the context of global environmental politics; environmental diplomacy, and/or climate mitigation (Falkner 2008; Di Gregorio et al. 2019; Hsu et al. 2020; Jakob et al. 2020; Miller et al. 2020).

The environmental issues have been a growth area for International Relations scholars. The International cooperation and regime establishment on environmental issues have been the realm of liberal institutionalists. The actors involved not only the states but also a wide range of other non-state actors including non-governmental organizations, multinational corporations, and other forms of governance (Vogler 2008). At the same time, environmental issues are also investigated by International Relations scholars in the context of security issues where they discussed the securitization of the environment (Buzan 1991; Buzan and Weaver 2013). Other theories in International relations also discussed environmental issues, however, this research would focus on the concept of environmental diplomacy and how the concept could be applied to the research need.

Environmental diplomacy is defined as “the established method of international discourse or the art of managing international relation, chiefly by negotiation, on issues related to environment” (Pisupati 2015). This definition is an improvisation of diplomacy definition by (French 1999) who stated that diplomacy is “the established method of international discourse or the art of managing international relation, chiefly by negotiation”. According to the (Pisupati 2015), there are four Principles of environmental diplomacy: 1) Precautionary Principle; 2) Common but Differentiated Response (CBDR); 3) Principle of Global Commons; 4) Justice and Equity.

The precautionary principle in environmental diplomacy is essentially a management methodology that prioritizes caution prior to actual action to prevent any unexpected adverse problems rather than provide a response after any negative results have occurred (Pisupati 2015). (Pisupati 2015) also argued that even though the precautionary principle has many variations and viewpoints, the principle is one that policymakers and stakeholders typically support in resolving environmental governance issues. With regard to the land and forest fires in Indonesia, scholars believe that the cause was mostly related to human beings such as the problem of patronage politics (Varkkey 2015), poor governance (Varkkey 2020), weak law enforcement, weak policy implementation and land-use planning issues (Meijaard 2015). Even, President Jokowi and Head of National Disaster

Agency, Doni Monardo mentioned and acknowledged that 99 percent of the land and forest fires in the country are caused by humans either deliberately or negligently (Andika 2019; Taher 2020; Yulika 2019). This means that human intervention by strengthening precautionary efforts must be the first and utmost solutions that are urgently needed.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative research method. The primary data collection was relied upon semi-structured interviews, involving related stakeholders such as government officials, academics, environmental Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) activists, peatland restoration officer, fire-fighter officer, small holder (palm oil farmer), and health practitioner (doctor). The interviews were conducted from December 2018-December 2020. In ensuring the quality of this data collection technique, all interviewees have experienced land and forest fires in the last five years (2015-2020). Most of the interviewees prefer to be anonymized due to the political sensitivity of this research. Thus, this research anonymizes all interviewees, however, information about their occupations and genders are disclosed in an annex table. Besides the primary data, the secondary data is also utilized, particularly the data from mainstream media news outlet which actively reported the land and forest fires occurrence. The data analysis is based on a triangulation of all collected data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

President Joko Widodo emphasized the importance of precautionary efforts during his visit to the land and forest fire area in Riau province in September 2019. He said that fire precautionary actions must be implemented (Suryadi 2019). He also mentioned that "Precaution action is more effective. Precaution does not require much cost. More effective. But, when it happens like what we see now, it has been a tremendous (difficult) work," (Kementerian Sekretariat Negara Republik Indonesia 2019). The President's warning with regard to the precautionary effort during the fire recurrence in 2019 was not the first time, as had already warned all related stakeholders regarding the need to focus on the precautionary aspect in his earlier time as the President, particularly in the event of land and forest fires in 2015 (Gabrillin 2015).

At the local level in Riau Province, rhetorically, the Riau Governor and Head of Districts also highlighted the importance of implementing the precautionary measure (Hidayat 2019; Kusnadi 2021; Interview 2 and 4). Ironically, both the President and the Head of the National Disaster Agency lamented on local leadership performance in handling the land and forest fires issue (Anwar 2019; Apriyono 2019). Furthermore, many of the interviewees (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12) believe that the precautionary principle has never been properly implemented, let alone to be developed sustainably to address the land and forest fires occurrence. This research examines two indicators that show the low implementation of the precautionary principle that affect Indonesia's current and future

environmental diplomacy image. These two indicators related to 1) Policies and programs for precautionary; 2) Behaviors of top government officials both at the national and local level, as well as the ordinary public towards the land and forest fires issue which are seen through the perspectives of interviewees and relevant scholar's view.

4.1 Policies and Programs for Precautionary

Since taking the top presidency seat in October 2014, just a month after the ratification of the *ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP)* by the Indonesian parliament, President Jokowi has created several policies and programs to address the land and forest fires issue. Some of the popular policies issued by President Jokowi's administration including but not limited to the creation of the Peatland Restoration Agency, mainstreaming law enforcement, issuing a permanent moratorium on new forest clearance (Diela, Davies, and Coghill 2019). Meanwhile, several renowned programs related to land reform that may help to decrease the land and forest fires are Lands Subject to Agrarian Reform (Tanah Objek Reformasi Agraria, TORA) and Social Forestry (Resosudarmo et al. 2019). Other programs related to fire prevention measures are the formation of Masyarakat Peduli Api (MPA) (Febrinastri 2018) and continuing previous administration programs such as water bombing, and weather modification (artificial rain). However, implementation at the local level is considered problematic and lack of synergy and coordination is also a major obstacle (Interview, 1, 3, 4, 5)

To understand the lack of synergy and coordination between the national and local level government, an interview with a civil servant official at the Forestry and Environment Agency in Riau Province has revealed some critical points (Interview, 1). First, he mentioned that sometimes the problem is not only about sectoral egos among government organizations, but it goes further to become budgeting egos. He elaborated this by stating that the budget must be spent collaboratively to tackle the land and forest and fires issues no matter where the budget comes from either it is from the government or the donor aids. He then further criticized that the budgets for handling the land and forest fire-related matters have been using inappropriately and off-target. Being used inappropriately means that the budgets of the national government and foreign donors are too much wasted for paying non-operational activity such as workshops, hotel accommodations, seminar rooms, and participant incentives and administrative purposes. Meanwhile, an academic interviewee (11) argued that the budget should have been allocated to help those who work on the ground to extinguish the fire, where it matters most. He once clearly saw thousands of soldiers were deployed to extinguish the fires and they had almost no means of support such as sufficient water pump equipment, proper masks for self-protections, or even mineral water (Interview, 11)

Looking deeper into local government policies and programs, Riau provincial and districts level of government also created and issued several policies and programs to tackle the land and forest fires (Hidayat 2019; Interviews, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8). At the provincial level, Riau Governor mentioned that it has 13 strategic policies to anticipate the land and forest fires (Kusnadi 2021; Lumy 2020).

These 13 above-mentioned strategic policies are: 1) Re-mapping the land and forest fires-prone area in Riau. Governor Syamsur said that there were 346 villages and 99 sub-districts that prone to land and forest fires; 2) Re-inventorying business permits on 387 oil palm plantation companies and 62 forestry companies in the plantation and forestry sectors; 3) Involving companies in joint patrols that can be closely supervised by the Karhutla Task Force of Riau Province; 4) Providing agricultural equipment in order to support 99 sub-districts that are prone to forest and land fires and also providing environmentally friendly plants; 5) Mainstreaming communities empowerment around the forest as a buffer zone so as to establish ecotourism and developing endemic peatland plants such as pineapple, garunggang and others; 6) Involving universities as precautionary effort to prevent and combat forests and land fires; 7) Creating a joint commitment to prevent and control forest and land fires between the Provincial and Regency / City Governments, Communication Forum for Local Leaders and business actors; 8) Creating information systems or early warning applications to detect hotspots in the field; 9) Constructing retention basin (embung) and canal blocking in peatland locations; 10) The formation of an integrated team to control illegal oil palm plantation; 11) Mainstreaming law enforcement and the enactment of Riau Province Regional Regulation Number 1 of 2019 concerning Technical Guidelines for Land and forest fires management; 12) Preparing volunteer posts for prevention forest and land fire; 13) Increasing synergy amongst government, universities (high education institutions), business sector and society (Kusnadi 2021; Lumy 2020).

In ensuring these strategic policies' effectiveness, the Provincial government must be able to work in synergic and coordination with lower local government at level, from districts, villages and even sites level. The importance of local precautionary efforts has been highlighted many times by President Jokowi (Anwar 2019). Furthermore, the governments at all levels also recognize the urgency of working along with many other stakeholders, to execute the policies (Kusnadi 2021; Lumy 2020; Interviews, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9). The Indonesian government also already called upon other stakeholders spanning from business actors, civil society, academics, and media to involve and participate in overcoming the land and forest fires related issues (Mufarida 2019). On paper, this precautionary effort by involving many actors seems to hit the objective of Indonesia's shared responsible affairs of the environmental sector, as the government also needs to obtain other different insights and perspectives from the non-state actors. Unfortunately, almost all interviewees (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12) agreed that working in synergy and good coordination, even at the technical level is still ongoing struggles and challenges of

Indonesia's current and future environmental diplomacy, particularly related to land and fires issue.

As mentioned earlier, this research links Riau's policies and programs all the way up to the national level and The ASEAN regional haze-free roadmap 2020. The Key Strategies, Measure of Progress, and Actions of ASEAN's haze-free roadmap 2020 consists of 8 points those are:

"1). Implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP); 2). Sustainable Management of Peatlands for Peatland Fires Prevention; 3). Sustainable Management of Agricultural Land and Forest for Large Scale Forest and/or Land Fires Prevention; 4). Strengthening Policies, Laws, Regulations, and their Implementations, including facilitating the exchange of experience and relevant information among enforcement authorities of the Parties in accordance with the AATHP Article 16 (f); 5). Enhancing Cooperation, Exchange of Information and Technology, and Strengthening of Capacity of Institutions at All Levels; 6). Enhancing Public Awareness and Cross-Sectoral and Stakeholders Participation; 7). Securing Adequate Resources from Multi-Stakeholders for Transboundary Haze Prevention, and 8). Reducing Health and Environmental Risks and Protection of Global Environment (ASEAN 2016)."

By linking the Riau Government and Indonesia's National or Central level Government program and policies, local programs, and policies with ASEAN's haze-free roadmap 2020 Key Strategies, Measure of Progress and Actions, theoretically, Indonesia's environmental diplomacy is somewhat good if not to mention great. This is because all aspects of ASEAN strategies, measures of progress, and actions have been covered by Indonesia's government, particularly by the Riau government at all local levels. At the earlier stage of President Jokowi's first term, particularly during the establishment of the Peat Restoration Agency in 2016, many of the interviewees (1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11) were seeing a positive sign and a correct direction. However, by seeing the complicated matters in the field over the last five years, most of them are critical about the current situation. These interviewees (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11) believe that the bigger proportion of current achievement is still in theory or on paper, and in fact, in practice, the reality is in contrast.

Regarding the two national initiative policies the TORA and Social Forestry that need to be implemented at the local level, the interviewees also viewed them as problematic and complicated. This is mostly due to the public struggles with limited understanding about schemes, responsibilities, and rights; weak governance at the community site level; and weak resource and capacity to deal with substantive and technical issues. (Interviews, 1 3, 5, 11). This finding reflects identical issues regarding the same policies in Central Kalimantan province (Resosudarmo et al. 2019). These

interviewees' views, especially when it relates to the land and forest fire issue is specifically confirmed by (Varkkey 2020) who argued that poor governance at the ASEAN regional and national-local level is one of the main obstacles to solve the issues of land and forest fires that cause transboundary haze in the long term.

Another important program to strengthen the precautionary efforts on land and forest issue is mainstreaming law enforcement which has been emphasized by both President Jokowi and Governor Syamsuar administrations (Gunawan 2019; Ratna 2020). The President believes that 99 percent of the land and forest fire is due to human beings either deliberately or negligently (Taher 2020). He also presumed that the land and forest fires seem like organized crime as he mentioned this during his visit to Riau in 2019, haze crisis, thus law enforcement is one of the main programs to address this issue (Gunawan 2019). However, at the national level, the government has struggled to collect the fine issued by the courts' decisions on guilty corporations burning the land and forest. This is partly due to the government (the executive branch) does not have the authority to collect the fine, as it is the authority of the courts. Of the 3.15 (three-point fifteen) Trillion Rupiah fine due to the land and forest fires, only 78 billion Rupiah were paid to the country (Rochni 2019). Interviewees considered that the law enforcement is still weak (1, 3, 4, 5, 11).

Meanwhile, at the local level, Riau Provincial Parliament Special Committee on Monitoring of Land Permits found that there were approximately 1.2 million hectares of illegal palm oil plantation and a finding which is similar to the investigation result conducted by the Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission in 2019 (C. A. Tanjung 2019a). The Public believed that most land and forest fires occurred on this illegal land caused by illegal corporations. (Aldoe 2019) Through this finding, the Corruption Eradication Commission had urged the Riau Governor to solve this problem. The Governor also gained support from the civil society petition signed by 165,000 citizens to curb the illegal palm oil corporations (Aldoe 2019). In response to this situation, the Governor created a task force to follow up on this issue in August 2019 (Gunawan 2019). However, until December 2020, there was no progress on this matter and the public started questioning this, doubting the Governor and his administration's capacity to resolve this matter (1, 3, 5). Then, it was reported on April 6, 2021 that national government through KPK urged and reminded the Governor of Riau to finalize the data collection on plantation business permits, in order to accelerate the implementation of the one map policy no later than at the end of this year (Syahrul 2021).

Overall, the weak and complicated policies and programs implemented in the field had been acknowledged by President Jokowi during his second inauguration speech where he made an auto-critic comment on his previous (first) administration performance (2014-2019).

He said “Oftentimes, bureaucrats will report to me, saying that the program has been carried out, the budget has been spent, that the accountability report has been completed. But when I check in the field, when I ask the people, I find out the public has not received the benefits [of the program]” (Tehusijarana 2019).

Thus, the current situation has tarnished the earlier efforts and bottled-necking potential significant progress.

4.2 Top Government Officials and Public Behavior.

President Jokowi is the first Indonesian President who was found guilty by the country Supreme Court in 2018 concerning the land and forest fires occurrence in Central Kalimantan Province in the year 2015 (Ihsanuddin 2018; Umasugi and Gatra 2019). Due to the nature of shared responsibility affairs of the environmental sector in Indonesia's autonomous political system, it is no wonder why the court has punished not only the national government but also the government at the local level authority, the governor, and member of the provincial parliament of Central Kalimantan. The court's decision has a national impact because the court ordered the government to make every effort to improve the current fire prevention and mitigation measure to prevent future forest and land fires (Saputra 2018). However, the Indonesian Government, according to the Ministry of Environment and Forestry would file a review of the Supreme Court's decision (Ristianito 2015). In 2020, it has been reported that the request for the case review by the Government has been submitted and registered at the Supreme Court on May 14, 2020 (Amali 2020). By submitting the case review, environmental activists uttered their disappointment and argued that the top government officials' behavior has contradicted their own promise to protect and preserve the environment specifically and generally to protect the future sustainability of the nation (Alairus 2019). The disappointment of these environmental activists was also felt by some interviewees in Riau Province (Interview, 3, 4, 5, 11)

When President Joko Widodo assumed his first term as Indonesia's President, he directly dealt with the transboundary haze in November 2014 (Varkkey 2017). This situation happened only a month after his inauguration and two months after the Indonesian parliament ratified the ASEAN Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP) that had been delayed for more than a decade. President Jokowi also experienced a lack of empathy and denial behavior from his Vice President, Jusuf Kalla, and Minister of Forest and Environment, Siti Nurbaya regarding the “haze diplomacy” towards Malaysia and Singapore (CNA 2019; The Straits Times 2015). In 2015, Vice President Jusuf Kalla told Singapore, not to complain about the transboundary haze crisis as it was only for a month, while he then said that Singapore never thank Indonesia for 11 months of clean air (The Straits Times 2015). This statement caused a prompt reaction by Singaporeans public by

establishing a satirical website to thank Indonesia for the 11 months of clean air (Lay 2016).

Back to the recent land and forest fires event in 2019, the haze crisis was also stained by Jakarta's top ranks official un-emphatic behavior. M Iqbal, the Head of Public Relations Division of POLRI (Indonesian National Police), and Idris Laena, a Member of National Parliament from Riau, as well as the Coordinating Minister of Politics, Law, and Security at that time, former general Wiranto uttered negative comments on the issue. They said that the sky was clear blue and there was no haze, the media reportage about the haze was hyperbolic (Lesmana and Sari 2019; Tallo 2019). Meanwhile, most of the interviewees (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11) who suffered during the land and forest fires in 2019 disagreed with the top government officials' comment.

At the local level, Governor appeared to be taking the land and forest fire lightly at the early stage of haze occurrence in 2019. The Governor said that the haze wasn't at a worrying level (C. A. Tanjung 2019a; I. Tanjung and Ika 2019). In fact, the public already suffered, and many were admitted to the hospital due to respiratory illness at that time (Nugraha and Bhwana 2019). The lack of seriousness of local-level government leaders had also been criticized by both President Jokowi and also Head of the National Disaster Agency (Anwar 2019; Apriyono 2019). Going down to the districts level, the Head of the National Disaster Agency, Doni Monardo also revealed the complaints from the Indonesian National Police and National Army leaders who worked on the ground to help extinguish the fire, noting the lack of seriousness of the head of districts in handling the land and forest fires, even sometimes they did not show up for meetings on related matters (Apriyono 2019). The pressures and critics towards the local government leaders who were going abroad during the land and forest fire not only came from national government officials (Safitri 2019) but also from the public in Riau (Kurniawansyah 2019; C. A. Tanjung 2019b Interviews, 3, 5, 11, 12).

This research's interviewees also uncover their discontent with the local government leaders' performance in dealing with the land and forest fires (1, 3, 5). However, they do not agree with a view which only puts blames on local government leaders. The interviewees argued that Indonesian politics has been plagued with patronage politics that preserve the patron-client relationships between the local and the national government elites (Interviews, 1, 3, 5). This understanding is confirmed by prominent scholars on Indonesian politics (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019; Muhtadi 2019). Hence, these interviewees (1, 3, 5) believe that many concessions are owned by businessmen who have a strong connection to the national elite leaders. This means that prior to putting pressure on irresponsible corporations which cause the land and forest fires or whose concessions were burnt, the local leaders need to think twice or maybe five times which may affect the future political careers of local leaders.

Two of the interviewees (3 and 5) even argued about the strong power of the big corporations in the palm oil and pulpwood industry which often seen as the culprit in land and forest fires. Even further, two interviewees (1 and 3) said that Indonesia as a country, and especially Riau is controlled by big corporations' power, let alone its Province's land. Most of these big corporations' owners resided in Jakarta or Singapore (3). The capitalist mode of production has also been blamed as the root cause of over-exploitation on natural resources in Riau Province that eventually contributed to the perpetual event of land and forest fires (Interview, 5). By looking at the nature of the patron-client relationship, local government leaders are seen in a very much weaker position, and national government elites, particularly the President and head of political parties in Jakarta, along with oligarchs are being considered as having very powerful position (Interviews, 1, 3, 4, 5, 11).

Ironically, the high hope on Jokowi's leadership was stained by his new-developmentalism approach focusing on infrastructure and economy as his top priority (Mukaromah 2019; Warburton 2016), leaving the environmental sector to one of the least important sectors in his current (second) term in the office. The President's joint approval with the national parliament on Omnibus Law or known as Job Creation Bill was seen as the peak of this irony. The legislation may cause irreparable harm to the nation's environment (Kine 2020). Therefore, Omnibus Law raises the huge potential practices of environmental crime in the aspects of political, legal, socio-economic, and cultural (Prakasa 2021). Faisal Basri, a Senior Economist of the Institute for Development of Economics and Finance (Indef), said that this legislation strengthens oligarchy grips in the country (T. Maharani 2020). Being disappointed with the President's field commitment an interviewee (3) asserted that President Jokowi is merely an ordinary politician, far from being a statesman, as he is seen to prioritize accommodating all vested interests of political actors and forget to make a legacy stamp on Indonesia's already damaged environmental sector.

Another example of ironic behavior shown by the President was during the land and forest fires in 2019, that was when President Jokowi refusing to accept the offer of assistance from the Malaysian Government. This attitude gained regional attention, particularly in Southeast Asia, where former Prime Minister Dr. Mahatir Mohamad was asked by Malaysian Journalists, why did Indonesia refuse to accept the aid? Dr. Mahatir then responded by saying that "I don't know why", "why don't you ask (Jokowi)?" (Zahid 2019). By refusing to receive assistance from Malaysia in 2019 and also from Singapore in 2015 (Hans Nicholas Jong 2015) to overcome the land and forest fires that cause the transboundary haze, this behavior has contradicted with the Key Strategies, Measure of Progress and Actions of ASEAN's haze-free roadmap 2020, particularly related to the following points:

"1). Implementation of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP); 5). Enhancing Cooperation, Exchange of Information and Technology, and Strengthening of Capacity of Institutions at All Levels; 6). Enhancing Public Awareness

and Cross-Sectoral and Stakeholders Participation; 7). Securing Adequate Resources from Multi-Stakeholders for Transboundary Haze Prevention, and 8). Reducing Health and Environmental Risks and Protection of Global Environment (ASEAN 2016)."

The President's poor and negative example was then truly duplicated by the Riau government during the haze crisis in 2019 that also declined the offer of help from the Jakarta Government. Even though the Head of Riau Disaster Agency clarified that it was not a rejection, instead he said that Riau had enough personnel to deal with the fires and the aid should be sent to a much-needed Province. (Umasugi and Gatra 2019). Unfortunately, some of the public in Riau who were suffering disagreed with this kind of move and could not accept this kind of behavior, it was seen as an act of arrogance (Rodzi 2019; H. Tanjung 2019) as the public believe that if Riau had enough capacity, then the land and forest fires would have vanished at that time (Rodzi 2019; Interviews, 3, 4, 5).

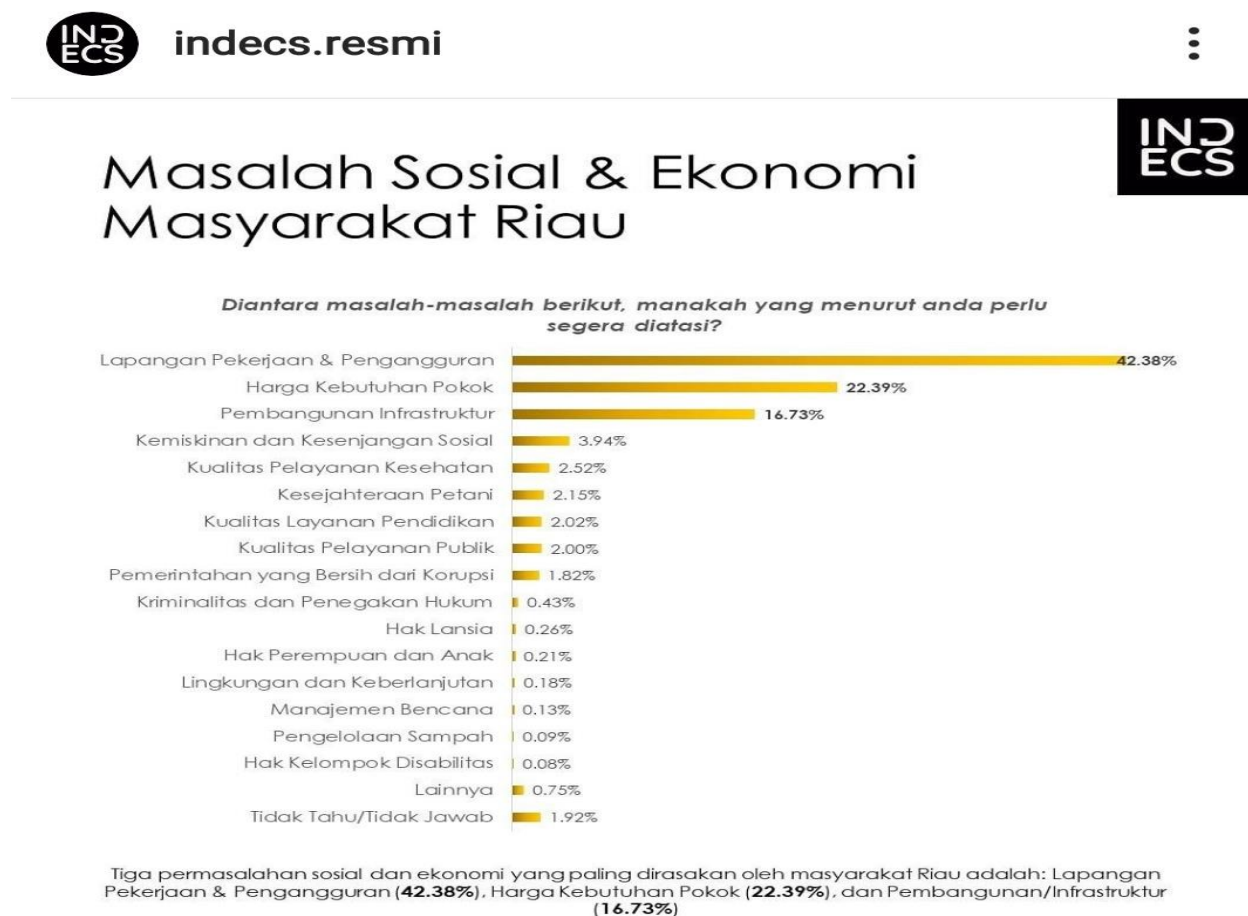
On top of that, during the land and forest fires that blanketed Riau along with several other Provinces in the archipelago and neighboring countries, this kind of behavior has shifted the humanitarian issue into a game of political interest. Some of the public in Riau accused the Riau Governor of being afraid of President Jokowi who they thought would upset if the Riau government accepted assistance from the Jakarta Government. This is because Jakarta's Governor, Anies Baswedan was known as a supporter of Prabowo Subianto during the 2019 presidential election and he was also perceived as a common political rival of Jokowi's camp (Rodzi 2019; C. A. Tanjung 2019a). In this case, all the research's interviewees (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12) also reflected a similar understanding and agreed that political interest should be left behind, particularly when the land and forest fires have reached a life-threatening level.

Moving to the public behavior towards the land and forest fires, many of the interviewees (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12) viewed that the public in Riau also does not prioritize environmental issues. These interviewees are confident that the issues related to the economy, such as jobless, high cost of living, and poverty along with basic infrastructures improvement considered as the top priority issues for the public in Riau. This argument is also consistent with a finding of a survey conducted by INDECS (Indonesia Economy and Election Consultants) in 2020 which was released on February 2021 regarding "Perception of Riau Public on Social and Economic Problems". By using multi-stage random sampling, this survey was held in 9 out 12 districts and municipalities in Riau Province with a total of 7,692 respondents or equal to 400-440 respondents in each district or municipality. Of the 9 areas surveyed, 6 of them are districts and city which are prone to land and forest fires those are: Rokan Hilir, Siak, Bengkalis, Meranti, Pelalawan, and Dumai (INDECS 2021).

Knowing Riau as the most fire-prone and fire-frequent Province in the country (Alfajri, Setiawan, and Wahyudi 2019; Sizer et al. 2014) this survey finding is surprising. The issue of land and forest fires which is part of the environment and sustainability section in that survey was by far posited below other sectors, putting it in 13th place. The

top ten priorities sectors which need to be addressed immediately according to the public in Riau are: 1) Jobs and unemployment; 2) Price of basic needs; 3) Infrastructure development; 4) Poverty and Social inequality; 5) Quality of health service; 6) Farmer's prosperity; 7) Quality of Education Service; 8) Quality of Public Service; 9) Clean and Anti-Corruption Government; 10) Crime and law enforcement. Further details of the survey can be seen in figure 1.

Figure 1. Social and Economic Issues of the Riau Public



Source: Abstracted from @indecs.resmi, 2021, "Social and Economic Issues of the Riau Public". Accessed from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CLWgubWrhyx/?igshid=1fgtgg6l4myjr> on February 17, 2021.

By looking into this survey results, it is very reasonable why Riau Province is one the most fire-frequent Province, as it is not only the government officials at level negligence behavior that contributed to the recurrence of land and forest fires, but the public low priority on environmental and sustainability issues in general also exacerbated the situation. Asking about how the land and forest fires influence the public voting preference

during the local election, and most of this research's interviewees view that the land and forest fire cases were never really becoming a top priority of the public in Riau. The minutes after the haze disappear from the public sights, most of them also forget about it until the next recurrence of the land and forest fires that cause the haze crisis affecting many aspects of life (Interviews, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12).

5. CONCLUSION

The land and forest fires that caused transboundary haze in the Southeast Asia region which mostly originates from Indonesia remains one of the important issues in Indonesia's environmental diplomacy. Of the four principles of environmental diplomacy, the precautionary is one of the most important aspects. At the early stage, especially after the establishment of the peatland restoration agency in 2016 and the introduction of new policies and programs such as the TORA and social forestry, there was a sign of a positive start. Moreover, both the national government and Riau local government administrations also emphasized the importance of law enforcement, another sign of correct direction. In addition, in the same year, ASEAN released its haze-free roadmap 2020 and it seemed that Riau Province 13 strategic policies cover all issues, key strategies, measures of progress, and actions as well as targets set on the roadmap. However, the policies and programs implemented on the ground are weak and complicated (interviews, 1,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,11,12), and this is in line with scholars' findings on weak and poor governance issues (Varkkey, 2020; Resosudarmo et al., 2019).

There are no easy solutions to deal with land and forest fires related issues. Indonesia needs to focus and prioritize its policies and programs on a local level such as in Riau or other fire-prone provinces, where the fire blazes and where it matters most. The negative behavior of top government officials and the public in dealing with the land and forest fire-related matters need to change as well. Shifting from a negligence attitude towards a responsible, caring, and compassionate behavior will be the key ingredients to keep up with the post – ASEAN haze-free 2020 and in solving this problem in the long-term projection. All related stakeholders spanning from government at all levels and other stakeholders, including business actors, academics, media, civil society organizations, and the public should pay more attention and avoid doing business as usual (1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 9, 11, 12), and work in a sustainable and collaborative manner to see a bright future of Indonesia's environmental diplomacy. On the other hand, if Indonesia fails to approach land and forest fires with such solutions, the future of Indonesia's environmental diplomacy may lead to a hazier and gloomier image.

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ANNEX 1. Interviewees in Riau Province December 2018-December 2020

No.	Gender	Role(s)
1	Male	Civil servant at Environment and Forestry Agency, Riau Province
2	Female	Civil servant at Environment and Forestry Agency, Riau Province
3	Male	Environmental NGO (Jikalahari)
4	Male	Environmental NGO (Perkumpulan Elang)
5	Male	Academic (UIN SUSKA Riau)
6	Male	Peatland NGO (Jaringan Masyarakat Gambut Riau)
7	Female	Peatland NGO (Jaringan Masyarakat Gambut Riau)
8	Male	Peatland Restoration Officer
9	Male	Head of a Village in Riau
10	Male	Small Holder (Palm Oil Farmer) in Riau
11	Male	Firefighter Officer in Riau
12	Male	Academic (Universitas Padjajaran)
13	Male	Health Practitioner in Pekanbaru (Doctor)

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