



MENTERI NEGARA LINGKUNGAN HIDUP
REPUBLIK INDONESIA

Welcoming Address
by
Minister for Environment
Republic of Indonesia
delivered at
Asia Pacific Seminar
Aryaduta Hotel-Jakarta, 5 September 2006

**Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen;**

First of all I would like to extend my warmest welcome and greetings to all of participants of this meeting, especially those coming from abroad. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this meeting of invited experts to address climate change and to promote awareness and exchange experience on the issues among the countries of the Asian and Pacific region and I am very pleased to be honoured to deliver the opening address at this 16th Asia Pacific Seminar. We hope that with the hospitality of our people you could enjoy the atmosphere of Jakarta.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere thank to the Ministry of Environment of Japan and Australian Greenhouse Office for giving us the opportunity to administer and be *a host of* this important seminar and to convey my gratitude to the *Overseas Environmental Cooperation Center, Japan* for providing their assistance to the Republic of Indonesia in arranging the seminar.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The climate belongs to us all. We see changes in the climate that worries us, changes that cannot be explained as natural and changes that may origin from human thoughtless use of resources and nature. As you are well aware, many

evidences showed that the climate is changing and Asia Pacific is one of the vulnerable regions to climate change.

Five causes of vulnerability to climate change in the Asia Pacific region are: destructive growth, poverty, political rigidity, dependency and isolation. Worse still the population pressure has led to an alarming rate of environmental degradation as a result of deforestation and other human activities. Impoverished populations are always at greater risk because they have fewer choices. However, rapid increases in population size, density of settlement and use of natural resources may also compromise responsiveness by damaging the buffering capacity of ecological systems against environmental adversity. There is no reason to believe that the Asia Pacific region will be spared, indeed, in many respects the region is particularly susceptible to climate-related impact such as public injury and illness. Most obviously, Pacific island states and the low-lying coastal countries of Asia are more liable than most countries to damage from rising sea levels.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

In Indonesia, in one of important watershed in Java, the observed annual rainfall is decreasing consistently at a rate of about 10 mm per year since early 1900s. Mean sea level (MSL) in three observation sites (Semarang, Jepara and Tanjung Priok) also increased consistently. On average the MSL in the three observation sites increased between 8 and 15 cm within the period of 1984-2002 (increase at a rate of between 8 and 15 mm per year). At global scale, number of climate related hazards have increased consistently. In early 1990s, total number of climate disasters reported was about 230 events, while in early 2000s it increased to 375 events or it increased consistently at a rate of 24 events per year.

Level of vulnerability of sectors to climate related hazards also increased. In Indonesia for example, the rice production loss due to extreme climate events associated ENSO in the last ten years increased three times compare to those occurred before that period, i.e. from 100 thousands to 300 thousands ton per year per district. Number of forest fires also increased from time to time and total burnt areas increased significantly whenever El-Nino occurs. In 1997 El-Nino, total area of forest fire reached roughly 10 million hectares.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Based on a few un-delightful facts mentioned above, it is very important for Indonesia and all vulnerable country to build capacity, partnerships and networks that would support developing countries to carryout assessments that would fill gaps in the knowledge base, link scientific and technical experts and other partners more effectively to decision making processes, and apply the knowledge in adaptation planning and actions.

The above facts and evidences alarmed us and we have to start thinking of building the adaptive capacity in vulnerable society alongside the main theme of Asia Pacific Seminar today which is "**Asia-Pacific Regional Approach to Climate Friendly and Climate Change-resilient Society**", the Republic of Indonesia is committed to integrating climate change variables into development planning. Therefore, this event would be very useful to share information and build relationships in an informal working environment and also gradually overcome obstacles in assessing vulnerability and build a suitable adaptation planning related to climate change.

I hope that you will share your knowledge and expertise with us through your active participation. I share your optimism for a fruitful and meaningful meeting and have pleasant and productive days. I hope this visit to Jakarta - for most of you the first visit to Indonesia - will open your eyes and minds for this unique part of the world.

With these brief remarks, I declare the National Stakeholder Workshop officially open.

Thank you.



Rachmat Witoelar