

Environmental Humanitarian Committee: Southeast Asian Haze

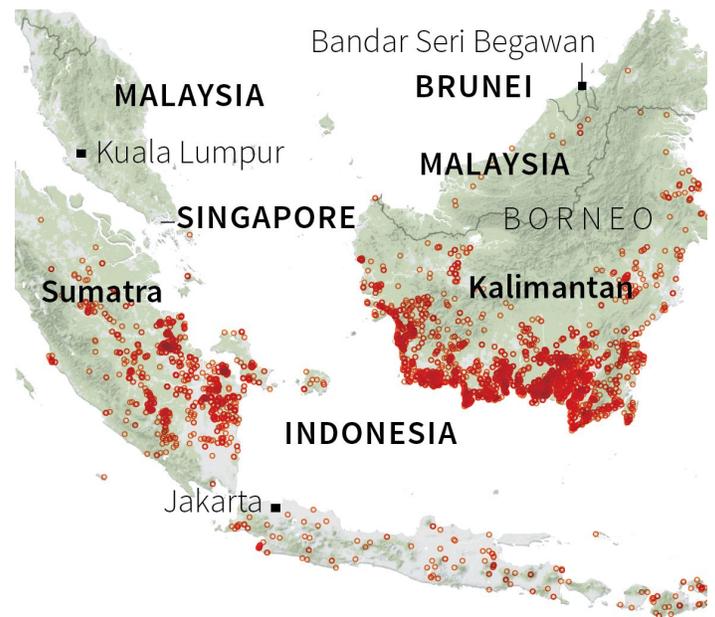
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I. Background

A. Indonesia

In 2000, Indonesia, an island nation in Southeast Asia, between the Indian and Pacific oceans, enacted swift legislation granting local government complete control to govern, bypassing the nation's previous provincial law. The sudden decentralization process consigned localities previously unheard of responsibilities. With many communities ill-fitted and under-resourced, power began to slip into the hands of industry leaders; the localities, as expected, protected personal output from regulation, pulling virtually any authority left from the central government. In the coming years, although Indonesia has experienced significant economic growth, regulation has continued to favor industry, causing vast social and environmental issues, specifically in relation to deforestation via "slash and burn practices". Such practices, although initially used by indigenous Indonesian communities for sustenance farming, have grown to recklessly burning thousands of acres of land, to quickly prep for agricultural expansion. Although not condoned by the central



government, localities have not outwardly expressed disapproval, nor moved towards any means to pass anti-slash and burn legislation, making it extremely difficult to halt the practice.

The deliberate burning of land in dry seasons, (typically a few months before the agricultural industry's main preparations for harvest occurs), has caused a seasonal haze to erupt across South East Asia; only worsening as the climate crisis continues to increase global temperatures. Although pressures have been laid by the international community for Indonesia to take direct action, to do so, it would need to practically overhaul its entire system of government, typically making treating the consequences of the fires a top priority before prevention.

II. Fire Damages

In the past few decades, these fires occurred yearly to clear land to meet the demand for the growing agricultural industry and these were normally containable. Starting in 2015, however, due to the increase in global temperatures and the general change in the Indonesian ecosystem, the fires started to grow beyond capacity; only stopping with the influx of rain in later months. Indonesian forests are responsible for holding 10% of the world's species of reptiles, birds, mammals, and fish. Much like the Amazon rainforest, they also store vast amounts of carbon in their soils and trees. Such is specifically being burned for palm plantations, as demand for "palm oil products", has soared over the past year.

Between 2001 and 2018, Indonesia lost 16% of its tree cover, or nearly 26 million hectares of forest, according to a database kept by Global Forest Watch. The loss of those forests released the equivalent of about 10.5 gigatons of carbon dioxide emissions. The country of Indonesia is to be blamed for these uncontrollable fires as Indonesian citizens keep, to this day,

burning trees and plantation in the region creating hotspots with 99% of these having the citizens to blame. Consequently, about 230 Indonesian citizens were arrested for deliberately starting fires and by practicing the “slash and burn”. According to Mongabay News, an Indonesian paper, a spike in fires has contributed to the razing of 8,578 square kilometers (3,304 square miles) of land across Indonesia, or an area the size of Puerto Rico, in September alone.

III. Haze Damages

As the aforestated fires continue to occur, its neighboring countries, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and, to a lesser degree, the Philippines and Thailand have been subject to its poisonous hazes. Throughout the years, many countries from the region have experienced these hazes and have not overcome its obstacles causing health problems, specifically, these have been linked to various cardiovascular conditions including acute ischemic stroke, acute myocardial infarction, and cardiac arrest. Consequently, it has affected the day to day lives of the citizens and, specifically, the students. In Peninsular and East Malaysia, over 2,000 schools have closed affecting more than two million students because of its high API (Air Pollutant Index) reaching over 200. Many countries have used salt and dry ice to precipitate the hazes but have been very costly. No effective solutions have been found yet to solve these problems. These countries and its region desperately await the ending of the haze season, yet, it doesn't seem to end any time soon.

IV. Guide Questions

1. Has your delegation been affected by hazes? If so, to what extent?

2. Is your delegation a major trade partner to affected countries/what incentives does your delegation possess to further the recovery process?
3. How does your delegation plan to aid in prevention processes?
4. Has your delegation previously been involved in environmental agreements/accords or legislation that could be used to leverage solutions?
5. Where does your delegation stand in the issue of centralization in terms of long term solutions?
6. Does your delegation aim to reprimand “to blame” nations?

V. Message of the Dais

The ongoing haze situation in the Southeast Asian region calls for worldwide attention as it serves as a dire consequence to the Global Warming Crisis. This background guide only serves as a mere look to a very complex environmental conflict in which also affects countries economically, politically, and socially. We encourage delegates to seek out well-constructed plans to tackle each branch of the situation that goes beyond the limitations of this guide for a more productive and constructive debate. The committee will be set by the time the current haze crisis starts. Position papers are due **Tuesday, November 12 at 11:59 pm** and are to be sent to the committee email: southeastasiahaze.apsmun@gmail.com. If position papers are sent late, points will be **deducted**. These should be at least 2 pages but no more than 3 pages and must be formatted in **double-sized spacing, Times New Roman size 12** with **1-inch margins** and should be sent as a **PDF document**.

We are very excited to see you all in committee! We look forward to seeing your interpretation of the committee and, most importantly, your well-constructed solutions to solve the ongoing crisis. If you have any concerns about the committee or position papers, don't hesitate in sending us an email!

Regards,

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