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## **Global Landscape Fire Award 2019**

Mangala Wanabakti, Jakarta, Indonesia, 11 September 2019

### **Notes for the Speech**

Today I am speaking on behalf of and in my function of Director of the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC). The GFMC is serving as Coordinator of the Global Wildland Fire Network. Since more than two decades the GFMC and the global network contribute to the international endeavors of society, governments and international organizations to reducing the adverse impacts of landscape fires on the environment and humanity. Our work has been recognized by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) as a Voluntary Commitment to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.



In 2017 the GFMC – through the financial support by the German Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture, based on a decision of the German Bundestag – has established its 4<sup>th</sup> Regional Branch by establishment of the Regional Fire Management Resource Center–South East Asia (RFMRC-SEA), which is based at IPB University. This Center is serving the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) with regards to our mission.

In order to create enhanced awareness of policy makers, politicians, administrators and scientists to bring the state of science and knowledge to practical and pragmatic application, the leadership of the Global Wildland Fire Network has decided on 9 May 2019 to launch the “**Global Landscape Fire Award**”. This prize will be awarded to individuals or institutions for:

***Recognition for the Successful Achievements in Reducing the Adverse Impacts of Landscape Fires on the Environment and Humanity and the Promotion of Sustainable and Safe Application of Fire in Land Use and Ecosystem Management.***

The **Global Landscape Fire Award** is a non-monetary award, which will be granted for the first time in 2019.

Based on the assessment of her achievements this first Award will be granted to **Dr. Ir. Siti Nurbaya, MSc, Minister for Environment and Forestry**, Republic of Indonesia.

We think that under the guiding policies of His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Honorable Mr. Joko Widodo, in response to the smoke crisis of 2015 and the goals and commitments imposed by the Paris Agreement of

2015, the Minister for Environment and Forestry has demonstrated to the international community that the Republic of Indonesia is on the right way to reduce the unnecessary, excessive and illegal application of fire in land use and land-use change.

### **Acknowledgement of the Achievements of the Awardee**

By assuming the responsibility of Minister of Environment and Forestry, Republic of Indonesia, the Awardee has taken initiatives of enactment of laws, rules and their rigid implementation and enforcement to reduce the excessive and inappropriate application of fire in land use and land-use change in Indonesia.

Personally I have been addressing the problem of excessive use of fire in the Maritime Continent of Indonesia since 1985 and have worked with many government agencies, scientists and professionals for over 30 years. We experienced that despite all the progresses, that we had achieved collectively achieved in fire science, pilot & demonstration projects as well as in furthering the policy dialogue it was never possible to convince policy and decision makers to halt the continuing deforestation and conversion of other sensitive ecosystems, such as Indonesia's equatorial rain forests and peatlands, by fire.

It was only with the appointment of Minister Dr. Siti Nurbaya by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Mr. Joko Widodo, that the situation changed drastically. It was for the first time since the early 1980s, when the problem of deforestation and land-use change by fire began to accelerate, that a politician took decisive action. Dr. Nurbaya played a

significant role in acting in accordance with existing national laws and international agreements, and to develop new rules and overseeing their strict implementation / enforcement to significantly reduce inappropriate, illegal and excessive burning of highly vulnerable and biodiversity- and carbon-rich ecosystems. While at the same time the release of greenhouse gases could be reduced significantly, there was also a very tangible impact on local populations.

Local populations living in the natural and cultural landscapes of Indonesia are the ones that are mostly affected by the consequences of fire application and wildfires escaping from land-use fires. Local farmers and forest dwellers, however, are also using fire in the frame of land clearing and slash-and-burn agriculture. In this regard, local people play a significant role to actively contribute in reducing those fires that cause environmental damages or may trigger disasters, like uncontrolled wildfires and dangerous smoke emissions.

Most importantly, however, is the fact the smoke pollution affects the health and security of local populations and often leading to high, largely unnoticed and statistically not captured premature mortality. Among those first affected are disadvantaged groups such as young, elderly and otherwise fragile people (such as those suffering asthma, cardiovascular disease, etc.). They are suffering most from the direct smoke inhalation or the long-term consequences of smoke particles deposited in their lungs.

With a significant reduction of excessive and dangerous burnings of vegetation, a consequence of the rigid enforcement of rules in fire prevention and sanctions of violators of the law, Dr. Nurbaya contributed more than any other related activity to tangible results by devising rules and regulations and ensured their implementation and enforcement. While this had to include public awareness raising with regards to participative fire prevention, the consequences of her rigid agenda resulted in the reduction of people affected by health- and life-threatening smoke pollution and ecosystem degradation.

The regulations enacted by the Government of Indonesia and her Ministry respectively provide evidence of progressing the legal framework and the implementation of laws.

This endeavor will remain to be an enormous challenge and difficult task for the coming years – the current fires and haze are witnesses for the difficulty to implement policies on the reduction of fire use and of wildfire prevention at all levels and sectors of society.

However, most important is the intent of the Government to overcome the problems and solve the conflicts of interests within the national society and the international community at a time, which is unprecedented with regards to the increasing vulnerability of the global environment and society.

May this **First Global Landscape Fire Award** serve as a recognition by the International Community of Landscape Fire Scientists and Managers of what you have achieved so far – and as a motivation for your Ministry to continue your mission over the coming years.

## **The First Global Landscape Fire Award comes along with two Certificates of Distinction**

The recipients of the Certificates have significantly supported the work of the Minister for Environment and Forestry. Without their active role in providing the scientific evidence and capacity building of national actors in the management of forests and other lands, public awareness building and the consequent enforcement of rules and laws, they have contributed to the success of the work of the government in reducing the unnecessary, excessive and illegal of fire in land use and land-use change.

Dr. Ir. Raffles Brotestes Panjaitan has performed his role of Director of Forest and Land Fire Management in the Directorate General of Climate Change in a very successful way and ensured the realization and enforcement of rules by bringing them to implementation and practice.

Prof. Dr. Bambang Hero Saharjo, Professor at IPB University and head of the newly founded Regional Fire Management Resource Center–South East Asia (RFMRC-SEA), is Indonesia's leading scientists who has devoted his professional career to explore the socio-economic and environmental context of traditional fire use and the consequence of modern and commercial land-use change by illegal use of fire. Professor Bambang has significantly contributed to the success of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry to develop the Grand Design and to serve as key expert witness for the enforcement of laws aimed at reducing the illegal use of fire in land use and land-use change.

Herewith I would like to hand over the Award and the Certificates to the Awardees.

Congratulations Dr. Siri Nurbaya

Congratulations Dr. Raffles

Congratulations Professor Bambang!