

SEAFORE Masterclass 2

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SPEAKERS

Muhammad Adib Faiz, Siew Lyn Wong, Dr. Helena Varkkey, Larry Maramis, Ajinder Kaur, Danny Yong, Surin Suksuwan

Danny Yong 00:00

Hi, for those of you who just come in, I'm Danny Yong. I'm from kiniacademy. I am the CEO of kiniacademy, and oh, there it is yes. Let me give a quick introduction on kini academy. Kiniacademy is a training arm of MalaysiaKini. We started some three years ago. We are very involved with upgrading and upskilling journalists. Yeah. So we cover all sorts of courses in training of journalists including new upskilling course that that's like our in digital skills. And we're very much into investigative journalism. And, and now, we also have some projects on our ASEAN collaborations. So we have one that is active currently with PCIJ of Philippines and Tempo Indonesia, where we are working on a project to cover the COVID-19 financing by governments in the region. Right. So obviously, this is another one of the ASEAN collaborations. So this particular project is the sponsor for this is IWPR or Institute of War and Peace Reporting. They are a network of organizations that's headquartered in London, headquarters in London, and the office we deal with is the office in Manila, as well as Washington DC. So IWPR sets out to support reporters, citizen journalists, and civil society. So we thank them very much for their kind sponsorship of this project. So what we tried to do with this project is to connect journalists. And two of us, so we The idea is to connect journalists, and in two main areas, I can't control it anymore. Can you go back one Ajinder. So the idea is for journalists, like yourselves to connect with each other and collaborate more. And we what we tried to do here is to connect you guys in two factors with two factors. One, all the journalists invited here are for reporting to the same deaths, which is current affairs and politics and that sort of thing. And secondly, we are connecting you based on common topics of interests, which is ASEAN related. Yeah. So the idea is this, this is one of those projects to help maybe start off the networking. So therefore, when you are in the chat group, we encourage you to have your name and your publication in in your profile name as your profile name, so that you know people know who you are. We also encourage journalists to join a little whatsapp group that we have already set up from the first masterclass. So that is, the idea is to, to to have that at hand. In the future, when you write a story that you want to reach across the border to get a comment to, to share notes with a colleague from the other country, you'll be easier. Additionally, when you see all these expert speakers that we have, we will also let you have access to them like for today, you'll be asking them plenty of questions, they then can be your source going into the future, right. So what SEAFORE is: there's three there are three components to the SEAFORE. One is a Masterclass series, obviously the masterclass series where you're attending right now we have three more coming up. That's in another one in September and two more in October. And we're working on of course reporting

project. So all reporters here are actively working on stories. So we have Alia, who is probably working on the last week's topic, which is labor migration, you know, and Alia and probably in Annabel, working on today's topic, so, and we also have a forum that will be coming up soon on seafare.org and the idea for that is to get more people to join a forum to discuss things, discuss all the different sorts of topics that are of interest to all of us. Okay, these are the five masterclass series, so please note the dates for the next three. The next one is two Saturdays from now, and then the following one two Saturdays from then and then two Saturdays from that, so 25th September 9, October and Third October. The one on 25th will be really interesting. Of course, we've we more or less passed the Phuket sandbox situation. Now, even Malaysia is talking about the Langkawi sandbox to pave the way for the reopening of the tourism sector for the rest of the country. And ninth October is on maritime security. I know some of you know a lot about it, some of you don't know as much part the aim of the masterclass is to help help you guys get up to speed with some of these topics of interest. So we package it in such a way that you'll get already input from the story from all these expert speakers. So there's a there's a quite easy way to get up to speed on this topic. And one final one is a big topic, which is turning the tide on corruption. So, all of these, all of these are really interesting and and what we do is we try to get we get the best minds from ASEAN to speak about this. I will let SL to introduce the rest of the speakers. But it's Wong Siew Lyn, Surin Sukswan. Obviously, he is Thai and Larry Maramis from Philippines and Helena, Dr. Helena Varkkey, so Singaporean. So we have these four esteemed speakers with us today. I hope I hope, I hope you guys will take the opportunity to ask as many questions as you would as, as reporters. So the idea is, we are here, ask the questions you want to ask, especially if you already have an angle in mind. So that, you know, you can fill out all the blanks that you are the gaps in information that you have. Through those questions. All right. And sorry, Helena. Dr. Helena Varkkey is Malaysian also. So sorry. Some housekeeping rules. We try to keep your mics on mute please. Yeah, and do leave your video on, so that the speakers, you know, they'll encourage the speakers to, to to be going to engage everybody as well. Do put your questions in the chat box, if you have them. Our team will put that together and and present that to the speakers. speakers will take questions. Sorry. Siew Lyn will be managing the managing this the sessions. And she will, she will welcome questions and she will probably take questions at the end of each speaker session. Maybe even before, we will leave it to her. The idea is to keep the conversation going. I think you guys know really this session is being recorded. And the recording, can we we will send the recording out one or two days after. All right. And we will also get the transcripts done and have that available on the website for those of you who wants it. Yeah, I know some of you will, will love to have the transcript to have that. You know, translated and you can use it in your in your home country. Okay. So let me go quickly to the poll results. Quite a few of you put together, came in and kindly fill up the poll. So it seems like the first one the first question as journalists, how often do you cover the environment and climate change? It seems like 70% of you do. So this should be quite interesting for you guys. And how familiar you guys with the ASEAN governance mechanism on haze. We do have Larry is going to help you help shine some light on this. So this will be his session will be especially interesting for you, if you want to plug in a gap in in the information. Is haze linked to climate change. Most of you think that's the case. Let's see what the speakers have to say. Right? The list of top three main drivers of deforestation in Southeast Asia. And, you know, overwhelmingly everybody says palm oil and infrastructure development. So I guess it's no big. No big mystery to everybody. In your view, to what extent does politics influence the haze crisis in South East Asia? So we looks like the respondents are all leaning towards the right side whereas more more influenced than not right. I wonder if the speakers will comment on holidays hope they weren't too late. So let me get straight to the event at hand. Once Yulin she's the co founder and editor of the environmental journalism portal matauranga. She's a kid, she's scaled based research and writer. And in almost 30 years, she's covered and consulted on environmental and sustainability topics. And she

has done that in print broadcasts and online media for a host of clients. She's also recipient of the rain forest journalism fund, a grant for environmental reporting connected to the Pulitzer Center. So Siew Lyn, take it away.

Siew Lyn Wong 10:35

Thanks very much, Danny. Hi, everyone, really, really happy to be here, very humbled to be with with all of you, but especially my peers, my fellow journalists from around the region. In Asia, which got Malaysia, of course, we've got, I think, Singapore based publication. And we're hoping that more from the rest of the region will join us as we go along. Maybe some people are a little bit late. So I know most of you from the publications, of course, and some of you from nearby lines, I know that some of you have already covered the haze, others have covered palm oil, others have covered deforestation. So from different aspects to different levels of depth. As we can see about 30% of those who answered the poll have not covered any kind of environmental issue before. So I'm going to try and address I think we're all going to try and address all the different levels, sort of things so. So what I'm going to do is to set the context for today's session, and then hand you over to the real experts, those with really, really deep knowledge. And these three experts have that it's very rare to get this breadth of subject matter panelists together, specifically to speak to you guys, especially to journalists. So I hope that as we go along, as Danny said, please ask a lot of questions, or put them in the chat group and in the chat, and then we'll try and get to them at the end of every presentation. And the rest of it will try and scoop up and you know, the kidney Academy team, I'm going to put them together at the end. And then hopefully, we'll have a good discussion going. If there's not too many of you. And I really haven't checked with the team about this, but maybe you can put on your mind so we can have a proper discussion here. So let's let's see how it goes. Yeah. Okay, so for my presentation, I have drawn mostly from regional publications here. And the credits are there. If you want to read the stories by your fellow ASEAN and international publications, no copyright infringement is intended These are for presentation purposes only. Yeah. So let me carry on now. Okay, so so let me begin with the context of trans boundary haze. This is an issue of air pollution is an environmental issue. Yeah. Just to bring you right back to basics, yeah. Air pollution, what is it? Basically, it's the presence of substances in the atmosphere that are harmful to the health of humans and other living beings. They can cause damage to climate, they can cause damage to materials. There are many different types of air pollutions air pollutants, such as gases, particulate biological molecules, right. So haze is one type of air pollution. Haze consists of small particles, so with this famous Pm 2.5, smaller than that very tiny particles that make up enough smoke, dust, moisture, and vapor suspended in the air to impair visibility. So that's what haze is. So you can see a big picture of Vietnam. Right now, we'll talk about trans boundary pollution. Now, haze pollution can be said to be trans boundary, if it's so dense, and so extensive at the source where it is produced, that it remains in levels that can be measured after it crosses a country's boundary through the air, right. So the definition of trans boundary pollution is pollution that originates in one country, but is able to cause damage in another country's environment. Okay, by crossing boundaries, through water or air, that's trans boundary. pollution, right? Pollution can be transported across incredible distances from hundreds and even 1000s of kilometers. They don't recognize any kind of national boundary at all right? Now, haze isn't the only type of trans boundary pollution. So just to set the context here. In fact, big environmental pollution problems are often transboundary. So we have here of course, plastic pollution. Southeast Asia's plastic pollution is polluting the world. There was a report that five countries for which are from Southeast Asia are responsible for 60% of plastic residue in the ocean, okay, and the impacts are many, the impact biodiversity. The economy, human health, plus plastic is also transported through the air. Another type of trans boundary pollution is oil spills. This is a picture from Malaysia. And it's along the coast of the Straits of Malacca, which is like a busiest shipping lane in

the world. So loads and loads of ships go through, we don't know where they registered necessarily. So when an oil spill like this happens this quarter, about two kilometres of the coast, on the west coast of Malaysia. I don't think that there was any actual findings out of this, right. They use drones and everything. And they tried to figure out that did come from. So the impact also is huge biodiversity, obviously, but also economic fishes, tourism, human health, right. So and then the last type of big transboundary pollution is, of course, POPs, persistent organic pollutants. Usually this refers to pesticides, right? So large scale agriculture, and we're going to be talking a lot about large scale agriculture. That's where enough of these pesticides are used. And then through the air again, they get transmitted across boundaries. And why are these so harmful, takes a very long time for them to break down. And they affect biodiversity again, especially pollinators talking about bees, insects pollinate, and obviously human health. So that brings us to transboundary haze again. Now, one nature of transboundary haze is that, it's seasonal. In ASEAN, it's seasonal. So for media, why report it when it's not happening? Out of sight, out of mind. So there's one group that thinks that this is news worthy, and this is the United Nations. In effect, they've decided it's so important, it's gonna be highlighted more. So in 2019, the UN had a new designated day, you know, the UN has all these different days for this for them the other, it's got one of the prettiest names, I think it's called the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies. And it was it just passed, it was the seventh of September, right. And this is a picture from the Philippines with blue sky, I think we'd all rather be there enjoying the blue sky, rather than here in front of a computer on a nice Saturday afternoon. But yes, it's basically to bring attention to the fact that air pollution is a very recent problem. So this year is only the second time that they've sort of observed it. And the hashtag is healthy air, healthy planet, for obvious reasons. We're in the midsts, in the grip of COVID here. So health is very, very important. And that's one of the two things that they have decided need attention this year. Now, according to the UN, air pollution, is the single greatest environmental risk to human health. Repeat that the single greatest environmental risk to human health. It is also one of the most avoidable causes of death and disease globally. So when I saw this figure, like how much more was actually exposed to polluted air, I was really struck, I thought, maybe 50%, maybe 60%, according to the UN 92% of our world is exposed to polluted air. And obviously, it's not exposed in the same to the same degree. And I'm going to keep coming back to that the fact that there is impact the impacts actually are unequal in our world. So the second thing that they want to highlight for this year's theme is impact of climate. So these three will air pollutants, why they call them short lived climate pollutants, right? They are the pollutants most linked to what they call near term, immediate warming of the planet. So now we know all about CO₂, climate change, CO₂, climate change CO₂, but these little things actually make up like 45% of greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming, okay. And they remain in the atmosphere for a much shorter time than carbon dioxide. And yet the potential to warm the atmosphere may be many, many times greater. Okay. So it's great to see that in the poll, the majority of people know and realize that the haze and air pollution are linked to a climate, and Surin actually is going to touch on that. So he is the speaker after me. Yeah. So moving on. Let's look at the impact. So I mentioned a few of the infectious now, what are the impacts of haze and air pollution? Obviously, it's not just environmental, it is very multifaceted. So what does it impact? It impacts human health. It impacts biodiversity. It impacts the climate, and it impacts the economy and politics. Okay, so these are the multi. This is what makes it very interesting. Environmental problem actually has many, many different facets, and that makes it very interesting and perhaps very challenging to report on. Okay, so now let's dive into the ASEAN transboundary haze. Now, in telling stories about transboundary haze, I just want to highlight two points during maps. That's really one of the best way, one of the best ways to tell environmental stories as a whole, but certainly when it comes to the haze, okay, again, out of sight out of mind, that's what I mentioned just now, there's always an eye in the sky, and that's satellites. And the use of satellite imagery actually makes it very hard for anyone to say that it ain't

happening. It's not coming, my country is not crossing boundaries or anything at all. And there's not just one satellite, it's multiple satellites, right. So I'm going to call attention to two. So two, two sort of sources for this kind of maps. One is the ASEAN specialized aetiological Center, which I think Larry might be coming to. So he's going to give you a fascinating sort of background, intro to the whole ASEAN setup for how this sort of ASEAN center came about, right. And what you're looking at here. So this came from ABC, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and they've used a map from global forest watch. And they also have very good, certainly clicking too fast back. Okay, so, so this is the global forest watch, map, okay. And basically, they give you very, very clear indications, you can see where the hotspots are, you can see where the most severe ones are the ones who are not so severe. Now, in terms of the other point I want to just highlight in doing environmental stories is please speak to the scientists, please get your science, right. Because, you know, you really need to do that in order to get your, your your facts really, really accurate if you're going to talk about other elements of this very, very complex problem. So please talk to scientists, meteorologists, air pollution experts, public health experts, just get the science right. And it's really quite critical, right. So what we have here in RCL, is basically roughly two to erase, you can sort of divide the problem into two areas, consulting countries, you can see here, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Timo listed, you can see all the way up to here that this is where his issue is affecting. Now, it just several points very quickly. And again, I'm going to leave it to the experts to bring you through this. But basically, in the south, it kind of began big, big events began in 1997. Now in 2015, the haze also affected Philippines. And you can see, it went up to lowest, that's how severe it was. Yeah. And the costs are many, we've got millions of hectares of land burned, millions of hectares of forest, that includes millions protection, suppose millions, billions of dollars, being you know, totaled out. And then you've got carbon emissions as well. And the social costs, education, poverty, and so on, so forth. Okay, and now we're going to move on to the southern move on to the sorry, to the northern part of ASEAN, right. But there's also a trans boundary case. And perhaps the people who live down south don't really realize what's happening on the loss, right. And so what you have here, again, use of maps from two different sources. On the left, you actually got the Thai space agency map. Okay, you can see all the different hotspots here. And this is this is from a publication, which focuses on the Mekong area. And on the right, we actually have a map from NASA. And between these two maps, you can see it's definitely hot spots in transplant reviews happening. Okay, so the northern countries will be Cambodia, LAO, Myanmar, and Thailand. Now, the this this kind of phenomenon started a bit later in the mid 2000s has gotten a lot worse in the last two years 2019 the disputes were longer and harsh. And he also started early in the year. Okay, and he blew over to the Philippines. So so you know, the transplant greenness of this problem is huge, right? And it's got the same cost of land burned forests burned into the money and so on. so forth, right. Okay. So I'm going to move on now it could be two drivers. Now. We'll talk about current and upcoming drivers. Now the next three speakers again, are going to be going to be doing a far better job than me and talking about this. But you can see from this picture immediately trans boundary piece is tossed by fire. Okay, now the poll results are very interesting, because you've got 100% of people saying yes, it's oil palm. The next highest is actually infrastructure. That's very interesting. And nobody said maize which is actually very, very key in the northern Southeast Asian countries. That's a very key source of haze in Southeast Asia. Countries right? Now, I'm just gonna mention a couple of elements that are usually connected to these drivers. So in the south, in southern countries, we've got El Nino, Southern Oscillation, that's its full title, we always say El Nino, just a reminder, it's natural. It's a natural climatic phenomenon, which occurs in the ocean, Pacific Ocean. Basically, basically, the surface ocean gets warmer, the winds get weaker, and then that leads to very, very dry conditions, which result in fires that are sent on becoming severe. Okay, the opposite is La Nina. And that means more wet than usual, kind of, okay. Other elements that are connected to the southern transboundary haze is the clearing of

peatlands in Indonesia, to plant oil palm, and trees for pulp and paper. All right. And yet another element I just want to point out is, again, the transnational nature of this Malaysian owned companies in Indonesia are some of the culprits okay? Now, going to the north, some of the drivers in the north, right? Is the burning of maize plantations, primarily, it's not the only thing but primarily maize plantations during the summer months for animal feed and for biofuels, right. So there's been an expansion of maize farms, huge maize farms, in the Shan state, Northern Thailand, in Lao, is related to poverty, farmers attracting debt, okay, so different different from the south or not. We'll hear from experts. And again, the transnational nature of this, the largest means for animal feed invested in Myanmar is a Thai multinational. okay? So we have human actions, human decisions, and consequences of that Surin and Helena coming up are going to be covering that. Can hear, very, very interesting points from them. They have studied this in great detail and fantastic, really looking forward. I'm looking forward to their presentations as well. The other driver, this is the lack of an effective ASEAN Regional approach again, and again. And again, we hear that every time there's a haze issue, we hear this. What's ASEAN doing? We need regional, we need regional to come in. So Larry is going to sort you out there. But I want to also look at other drivers that are current or in the future, I want to look at climate change. Okay, we've got this 1.5 degree thing happening, this is very big year for for climate change again, and as well as for biodiversity loss. World's getting hotter. How is this impacting the transplant rehab? Haze. We've got COVID-19. Okay. And the impact of coming out with COVID-19? This, is there a green New Deal? What is it? Is it ASEAN? Why is it going to work? in this kind of situation, just like to throw all these different ideas out there? Okay. So, so those are the drivers. Now we talk about stakeholders, we have a picture here of Singapore, we see the merlion there, but also got other elements here, we've got a child here. So the stakeholders, the people, obviously, people's health, I'm going to point out again, is that enough coverage of the most vulnerable of society: children, the poor, indigenous communities. And then obviously, this is Singapore, nations are a stakeholder. So you've got Singapore, little island, completely surrounded by actions that they can't control. Right. So they came up with an Act to try and do that, to prosecute companies and individuals, individuals as well, that cause air pollution in Singapore, outside of Singapore. I don't think they've actually applied that at all. Okay, why? Okay, and again, talking about countries, and we're looking at ASEAN here. Who are the most vulnerable countries who are the most poor these countries? How is this actually affected them affecting them? And is it going to continue to do so? Right? And then you see a very big, all these big buildings here are businesses, big, big, big businesses real from the impact of transplant rehab. So we have the financial manufacturing, tourism, agribusiness, agribusiness, especially, and we're going to come into that a lot. Okay. And of course, the final lot of stakeholders on mentioned that the natural world, Wildlife, and forests, okay. So let me come now to narratives. Okay, let's look at how media has been covering this. And we're going to focus on two publications on the south. So bear with me, Malaysiakini and tempo, are not trying to create a wall between the two publications. So bear with me, I'm just using this as examples, right. So what we have here is in 2019, so we had hotspots. So this, this is the map that you can see over and over again, this is from the ASEAN meteorological Center, which is very, very important everybody refers to so you can see where the hotspots are, and have they floated over Indonesia, as well as the rest of the region as well right to the states here as well. And then what happened in this piece was they also covered you know what happened locally. Basically, they will also pointing out hotspots within Peninsular Malaysia because it's not all impacted. But then what happened? Was in tempo, this is the tempo piece. And what they did was to report of Meteorological Department leader who said, Oh, no, no, no, the haze actually isn't coming. The haze in Malaysia isn't actually coming from Indonesia. Wow. Okay, so what happens then? And then this is a Malaysiakini article, and this is just a reflection of the whole Malaysian media. And they reacted immediately and said, No, no, see the map see the map. This is the haze really, really came from Indonesia. So it really

has been affecting us, you know, and this goes on, it gets escalated. So then, you know, Indonesia claims that haze in KL, or a minister comes in and says this in Indonesia, this is a MalaysiaKini report. And then you've got tempo reports saying, okay, Prime Minister of Malaysia actually says, okay, Indonesia is in denial, right. So this is from one day to another day. And then the third day, boom, okay, oil, palm companies. That is always the narrative that comes through. So blame the oil palm companies, and then the same narrative gets repeated over and over again, by which time everybody is like all this finger pointing people are really fed up. And then tempo comes up with a lovely article on spider man who tries to say to tries to save the day. So you have is a mythical hero, who is actually amongst the people and trying to do something practically on the ground. Anyway, this is just to say, Okay, how can we raise the narrative? Now, the news, folks, you guys have to do your job. You guys have to do your job. But there are like news narratives, news features, that perhaps could you include something else? Could you include? That the political element rather than just referring to a geographical or a scientific point of view, right? Be careful of national biases? I'm as guilty as anybody else. The use of media, by governments and by politicians? Is it an election year? Is the minister under some sort of pressure? Is there mishandling of another environmental problem? Is your company being supported by advertising from a big multinational? So these these are all different things, then, is there opportunity for collaboration between media, which is one of the goals of this project? Really, right? So Helena is going to come back at the end, we're talking about narratives from a very specific point of view, right? So I'm just gonna end very quickly here and the time is up. And Excuse me. Okay, so the narrative as per the title of this session is basically you have haze transboundary haze cause which is linked to deforestation, which is linked to oil palm, okay, is this the narrative? So I'm just going to end here, and put out the three next speakers to see how you could possibly broaden the narrative and raise the nature of the narrative. Right. And that's it for me. Thank you very much. So. Right. So lots of questions. Okay. Anybody got any questions? You just dropped them in here? I'm going to get the if the speakers, the other panelists could just unmute your microphones, please. I think Helena, you had a question about environmental reporting that we were talking about before the session. Helena? Okay, we appear to have lost her. Okay. Surin. Do you have any intervention please?

Surin Suksuwan 33:47

Yeah, I mean, just observation. I think it's very relevant to talk about narratives and perceptions, because I think that there's a lot of science, but you know, the science can also be seen from different lenses. You can you can read a piece of fact, but then you can choose interpret different ways as you can see. Unfortunately, I think it's a tough job for journalists because if you go into too much detail, you've got too much jargon you'll lose your audience. And you know, the audience be the general public in Southeast Asia and it's so how do you balance it out between having too much detail too much times and then resolve alienating your audience but same time, we don't point out the facts, present them in a systematic manner. You know, the truth could be could be even harder to reach. And then in the midst of all of this, you have politics coming in and, and interregional you know, kind of conflict. So some deep rooted cultural issues as well, you know, the kind of friendly library in Indonesia and Singapore, issues of cultural misappropriation between Indonesia and Malaysia, for example. So when they're all in the mix, and you really do get a hazy kind of situation. So that's just an observation on my side. Thanks. Yeah,

Siew Lyn Wong 35:21

thanks Surin. Yeah, he was delivered, right? Yeah, and I guess this is the thing is, it's very challenging for journalists to try and keep in mind all these different things, you know, reporting deadlines, and you've got to get the new story out there. And, you know, to try and keep all these different things in

there might be a little bit difficult, it is perception. And what the media does, actually is, as media practitioners, we are responsible for shaping that perception. So So, yeah, I'm just going to come to one of the comments here. So Deborah says one of the pictures from the last slide was from your colleagues illustrated, which is why I really loved that, that approach. So New Narrative came out with, I think, a series of three articles on the haze in 2019, if I'm not mistaken, and one of them was just the approach was a very emotive one. So the series of articles of illustrations very poetic, actually, and trying to get to the emotion of the impact of the haze on people, you know, so many, many different ways of storytelling, for sure here. And we have a question from Adib as well, who says to what extent does terminology play a role in defining the narrative surrounding transboundary in Southeast Asia? terminology as like saying that it is haze as opposed to?

Dr. Helena Varkkey 36:46

Maybe I can, I can try. I think maybe I can give some context to this, perhaps Adib, I understand you correctly, the narrative terminology about haze in particular, so one of the things that was really interesting that I kind of discovered digging back into, you know, where all these come came from, what were the words being used to describe the problem? So, because, you know, ASEAN, even though the speaking language is English, but there was actually no standard term for haze so for example, in Malaysia, we call it "jerebu". But if you go to Indonesia, and you ask somebody, ada jerebu tak this year, nobody will know you're talking about because they call it "asap". So there's no standard. There is no standard term for here. So actually, from what I gathered with, with my research, in the beginning, when ASEAN wanted to even address the problem, they had this issue, why should we call this problem actually, and there were several terms that was floated around. So for example, like smog or fog and stuff like that. But there was, apparently it was a very deliberate choice to use haze because if you look in the dictionary, haze actually a natural phenomenon. It's not a man-made one, as opposed to smog, which we know like London's smog, it's very industrial, it comes from the factories. So it seems like it's a very, it's a very manly thing. So at the time, you know, all of this was very sensitive, we didn't want to point fingers, it's very much in the ASEAN way, kind of thing. So the deliberate choice was made to not use the word smog, and instead use the word haze, which is a bit more open ended, in terms of who's at fault. So don't really put focus on the fault, but more put focus on the solution of the problem. So this is why we use haze officially at ASEAN. And this has become to what we know today, like as haze is what we think of automatically. We don't use any either terms, especially in English. But it does, I think, play a part in how we understand and how we view the problem. And especially in the in the early years, there was quite a lot of difficulty to actually start even talking about what are the real drivers for haze in ASEAN. I think we've come a long way since then. But in the beginning, definitely this was a big political issue, sensitive issue, to even what actually caused this. I'll stop there. Thank you.

Siew Lyn Wong 39:21

Thank you. Thank you. Very good, contextualizing and Yes. Does that answer your question Adib?

Muhammad Adib Faiz 39:27

Yes, it does. Thank you very much.

Siew Lyn Wong 39:29

Thank you. Yeah. So So terminology is something that's that's very tricky. And we're going to hear lots of this negotiations and stuff like that in ASEAN levels from Larry afterwards, who actually was was at some of the formulations of so he was very seminal point of trying to address this big issue. So be very,

very interesting to hear from him. Definitely, yeah. We have someone joining us from Frontier Myanmar. Hi, how are you? And unfortunately, I think today's talk will be largely focused on the south countries and on the issues in the south and so, please feel free to share everybody who's from from the northern countries. And I really hate to have this north south divide, but you know, slightly similar, but slightly different kind of issues that you know, and please feel free to share, you know, putting your mind at the end, to share any thoughts that you have of what's happening out there, and how journalists are trying to cover the issues over there. Larry, I have a, I have a question for you. Now, in terms of media coverage of the ASEAN approach, and I know you're going to get into this, you know, a little bit later, have narratives changed. You've been you've been, like, Helena, have been studying this a long time, been in this formulating and other kinds of. Have narratives changed very much, or are you reading and listening and watching TV, the same thing over and over again?

Larry Maramis 41:00

I think the narrative has changed. The public is generally more informed. There's science involved in in being infused in the discussion, then like, I think it has been pointed out that science could also be like, Surin actually pointed out, right, science could also be used, well politicized as we, as we see. And so there is that that issue. So the level of discussion and narrative discourse, public discourse is relatively relatively sophisticated, I would say, because it's now we are talking about an informed public. But there are issues of where the narrative degenerates into very political rhetoric. And and, and, as you already pointed out, as Siew Lyn is also tied very much, you know, suspiciously with the real elections. So there are these issues that one has to be careful of, I mean, from our side and researcher side, the media certainly needs to be aware that, you know, as as the political temperature rises, the rhetoric also does the same. I think that that is, but generally, to get to your point, the language, the terminology, the vocabulary, the standardization of terminology is now there. I think, as Helena pointed out very well. There were issues in the beginning about using the word haze. There's no problem with that. Now, I know people understand that, you know, people also connect with one word issues, rather than make it more nuanced than too complicated. Yeah.

Siew Lyn Wong 42:47

Thanks very much for that, Larry Yeah, we certainly look forward to hearing from your little bit more. Surin, I'd like to come back to you as well. Now, you you work both in Malaysia and Indonesia, currently, although you've worked in many other countries as well. Is there a particular you know, you mentioned also like, cultural differences between the two countries? Do you see that still playing being being actually right now, in terms of media coverage of it? Do you see this happening amongst other countries who are trying to deal with the transboundary haze?

Surin Suksuwan 43:23

Well, I think haze like many other issues, have a tendency to, you know, kind of emphasize any kind of inter-cultural issues or historical kind of conflicts, you know, on the one hand, it can be quite light hearted, and your hand can get quite serious as well, depending on the situation, right? So I don't think that these kind of issues can, can disappear completely. I mean, even when we're talking about food, for example, and people start saying that, you know, something is their heritage. And then you see another culture or country reacting to that saying, Oh, hang on, as always, as well. And so I think, when you have a kind of very controversial issue, like, haze, where there is a lot of finger pointing, I think those issues will come up again. So I don't really see how people can get away from that. But, you know, in the in the context of regional cooperation, then hopefully, at least at the governance level, people would set aside those kind of differences, because, you know, those kind of conflicts tend to be

a more personal level, you know. But usually, when we have diplomats talking to each other, I mean, that they wouldn't usually have that in their way and probably, somehow you can confirm that I think when it comes to regional cooperation If you would just focus on the problems and see how I can solve them.

Siew Lyn Wong 45:04

Okay, yeah, we'll definitely hear more more about that from Larry in how easy it is to focus on the issue and not have regional differences and cultural differences. And all the rest of it. sort of get in the way. Yeah. Okay. So So, so shall we go on to you now? Surin. So let me just do a very quick introduction of you can read his his his CV, basically, on the on the literature that's been given out. Surin is Southeast Asia, regional director of a consultancy firm based in KL, Kuala Lumpur. He's got more than 20 years of experience in natural resource management and biodiversity conservation. He's a real expert in protected areas. Forest landscape management as well. Yeah. He has worked for an NGO, he's worked for, for for for a consultancy as well. Yeah. And so he's got, he's experienced many, many different ways of working and coming at problems, the real problem solvers. So basically, Surin, I'd like you to take away I think we're going to have a very interesting presentation from him, and hopefully followed up by a very, very good discussion following from this. So in, please take it away.

Surin Sukswan 46:19

Thank you, Siew Lyn. And Hi, everyone. You know, happy to be here and engaging your view. And yes, I'm hoping that we will have a very interesting session, which will take course over most of this afternoon. Anyway, the topic that was given to me was talk about the nexus between the environment and the economy. how, you know, palm oil and sustainability and, and haze are connected. And there are a few missing pieces in between as well, which I will discuss. And also in a challenge some of the current perception that that some people might have my head in terms of the cause and effect of haze. What has, you know, what is the role of the private sector in the companies? And also, I think something that is not so much talked about, which is the solutions part, and not just, I'm not touching on the inter governmental type of solutions, which I think Larry would cover more in detail, but more more about the private sector response, because that I think, is often overlooked, and, it's interesting to know that, you know, especially in recent times, some of the big corporations in the world F, you know, GDP is they're bigger than some of the smaller countries in the world. Right. So the role of the private sector cannot be overlooked. So, yeah, I believe I'm have control now of this slide. Yeah, I do. Okay, so, as a brief outline of my presentation, I will talk about some, you know, what are the key drivers of position both in, in the Southeast Asian context and also globally, just to, you know, understand the differences. And, yeah, I know that some you responded to the poll. So let's see whether you're on the mark or, you know, there are other things that you might have missed. And I will also try to link up between deforestation, haze, climate change. peatlands, as well, right, so how they connect with each other? And then I'll zoom in a little bit more on palm oil, because palm oil is the topic that people seem to kind of immediately come to mind and have in their mind when when it comes to haze. Not sure why, but maybe we can try to see what could be the reasons to that some, some of it valid, some maybe not so valid. And then we'll talk about how crop production in particular and I'll use the example of palm oil because there's a lot that has been done with regard to palm oil sustainability, but you know, much of it is also applicable to other crops. Yeah. Okay, so just looking at it from a global point of view, what are the key drivers of deforestation. And this this data from the FAO, unfortunately, we don't have very up to date data, because there's always a lag time in terms of coming up with the analysis, right? Because you have to look at the trends over a number of years and then you have to spend quite a bit of time analyzing and then you get a paper published not right so even though this paper was published I think

around 2011 or so, but the data was up 2008 and And maybe FAO might have come up with a more recent analysis. But you can see that while the, you know, the values might have changed, but if you look at the overall trend, even from 1990, and to the year 2000, compared to 2000-2008, the trend hasn't changed that much in terms of what are the key drivers, right. So it's interesting to note, for example, that there's a lot of unexplained forces, as in, you know, people don't know what the key drivers are, so maybe the area's burned, and then it's less idle for a long time people, people don't really know what happened to it. So, sometimes this is not really obvious, what is the purpose of the deforestation because the way that they track the position needs to see after the area's been cleared what gets planted on it. So, the assumption is that whatever gets planted on it was the reason why the area was clear in the first place, okay. So, but I mean, between 90 - 2000 period 2009, at least more information was, I think the detection of deforestation improved, also the monitoring have improved, and, and therefore, you know, the number of unexplained events has decreased by between those two time periods, you can see that by in terms of the major drivers, you can see that the key ones are still there, no major change with regard to crop production. So, so the expansion of agriculture is still the leading cause of deforestation globally, followed by as you can see, in the dark blue here, livestock production, actually. So you know, so you have crops and in your livestock in both are basically different categories of agriculture, right. So you can see that if you combine these two, you know, clearly in agriculture, by far is the main cause of deforestation. And then after that, you have natural hazards like wildfires, fires can actually occur sporadically, or, you know, on its own right, and in because of increased heat, and so on, right, so you can combust naturally so and then you have some other minor causes, logging industrial around here. And then also infrastructure threats, that's the global picture. And then if you look at the, the regional scenario, and I'm going to focus mainly on Southeast Asia, because that's, you know, that's where we are, and that's what this session is all about. Right. So I've put these two big arrows there, just so that it's easier to focus on, on the specific section of the chart that you should be looking at. So if you look at the two time periods gain 2002, to 2008, and 1992, and year 2000, you can see that actually, in Southeast Asia, there has been some changes in terms of the key drivers. Again, as with the global scenario, the number of deforestation events that are unexplained have dropped between the two time periods. So in 2008, you can see that unexplained deforestation is now not a major proportion of total deforestation, as you can see in 1990 - 2000. Remain driver is crops. Yep. And again, that's not much change from the earlier time period. And then, but there's a big change in natural hazards. So in 1990, to 2000, you see that there's a lot of deforestation that was attributed to natural hazards but then that's has dropped significantly, and then the rest remain more or less the same. You have livestock, industrial roundwood or industrial logging. And then infrastructure development. Okay. And if you just if you imagine just just taking the portion that says crops here, yeah, like crops and livestock, yeah, these two categories, and you zoom in further into that. And here we have a slightly more recent data. This is from a report that came out in 2016. But I think the source data is still covering 1990 to 2008. Actually, the main cause of the, the Yeah, the main driver of deforestation in the agricultural sector is livestock. Right. So it's interesting, right, and this is where we talk about perception as well. There's a lot of NGOs, consumers campaigning against the use of palm oil for example, because they say that palm oil is a major cause of deforestation, but you don't really hear people saying, Okay, you got to stop eating beef or, or McDonald's or whatever, because it's causing deforestation. Right. So, but by you look at the facts, it's actually says that beef, especially cattle farming is a major cause of deforestation. Yeah, by far, you can see the chart. Yeah, and then the other kinds of livestock being poultry because they tend to be more intensive, right? People have pig pens, they have chicken coops, you know, they have, you know, down like, like a factory even like, the way chickens are being treated these days, you don't really have free ranging chickens being bred in in large scale, but with beef with cattle, sorry, you still need all that space for them to roam. So that

especially in Brazil, as you can imagine, you know, huge areas are being cleared, being being burned and so on, in order to make space for for cattle farming. So that is the key driver of deforestation worldwide. And then other crops soy, maize as soon as mentioned, and then palm oil. So as you can see, from a global ranking point of view, where crops are concerned, palm oil is actually ranked number four. Not to say that it's totally blame free Yeah, still a significant amount of of the deforestation is due to palm oil expansion, or palm expansion. But I you know, it seems like they're getting the palm of people, the palm oil industry are getting a disproportionate amount of the bad press as compared to livestock. And more specific to Southeast Asia, we have two key elements of of climate change, actually, or GHG emissions. So I mentioned I've been talking a lot about deforestation on the charts that I shared with you earlier was about deforestation. But the other big thing really is peat degradation, because not all forest are equal, so most forests around the world, not on peat land, right beyond mineral soils. And when you when so what you what you are concerned about is the the whatever that's above ground, right, the trees, the leaves, the branches, whatever, you know, whatever it is above ground a little bit in the root as well. So when you have deforestation, all that plant material is going to decompose and turn into carbon dioxide, methane, all the other greenhouse gases. So So yeah, that's why deforestation is one of the main causes of GHG emission leading climate change. But when you have forest on peat, then the problem is like double or triple because a lot of the carbon is actually stored underground, when you have peat soil. So peat soil is basically is made up of undecomposed organic material, it's kind of like a huge carbon store, within the soil. And then when you start draining the peat and and and and you know, start planting on it, that that organic material is will start to decompose and it causes a huge amount of GHG emission. So I put this simple venn chart here just to show that you have deforestation, you have peat degradation degradation, then you have this overlap in the middle where you have forests. And when you also have a lot of feed that is not forested anymore, maybe the forest is a long time ago. But as long as the peat soil remains with all that organic material that it will continue to emit GHG gases. And in Southeast Asia, we have particularly deep heat that can go up to say even three, four or five meters deep. So that that's why it's a huge issue. And this just a simple diagram showing how peat is formed, you can you can find out more about this yourself. But essentially you have a waterlogged area you have plants, trees growing and then as time goes by the trees, you know, they topple over, the organic material falls into the waterlogged area. And then you have soil starting to deform over time and this could be over hundreds or 1000s of years. Eventually you have the piece all developing is kind of in a boom shape. And then and then you have a forest going over as well. And yeah, that that's basically how you have all these organic Material accumulated in the soil and that basically is is combustible and a major cause of fire and haze during the dry season. Yeah, so basically this is the kind of progression in terms of how peatlands end up from being in a natural situation they get drained out because you know, peat in its normal form is usually wet and is waterlogged. But in order to cultivate on peatlands, they will construct canals and drain water out. And then you end up with dried peat, the organic materials exposed to the sun, it starts to decompose and then becomes combustible. So two things happen. You have peat fire, and then the gases released to the atmosphere, but the solid itself as it gets burned, also subsides and sinks down and then actually becomes flood prone as well during the wet season. So the end effect you'll have GHG emissions and flooding GHG emission fires during dry season, flooding during wet season. So it's a huge problem on many dimensions. Alright, so that's just a pictorial kind of, you know, you know, a present presentation of, of what I was saying just now from natural peatlands, deforestation, clearing drainage, fire, and then sometimes being planted with plantations. And one reason why you get a lot of oil plam planted on peat is because they do tolerate the high water table. Not all plants are able to to survive in peatlands, but oil palms plantings, actually, quite well adapted to that. And that's why you have futures of peat planted with. This is a pretty neat GIF that I got from from an Indonesian site, I think it might have been br ght,

which is the Indonesian agency. But as you can see, it's got this graphic that shows how fires can actually persist underground in the peatland because of the organic material. And then it might then come up to the surface. So that's why peatlands are notoriously difficult to manage, difficult to put out fires that are occurring and keep them because these fires here can rage on for weeks, while on the top, you might not see the fire, and then eventually they find an outlet and then they fire back out again. Um, interestingly, due to efforts by the Indonesian government, you can see that the deforestation rates have dropped between 2011 and 2020. And again, there's so is an issue of perception and, you know, biasness, as well, from the Indonesian point of view, the the government said that, well, it's mainly due to our action, because we have Pete moratorium, we have an oil palm moratorium, you set up the peat restoration agency, we've done a lot of things, we've worked with NGOs, blah, blah, and therefore we have managed to bring down the deforestation rate in Indonesia. And that is measurable, right, because you have satellite imagery, they can back it up all kinds of data. But then you still have campaigning NGOs saying that it's not really so much due to the effort of the Indonesian government. But it's more to do with NGO pressure, for example, it's got to do with COVID, because there's less activity during COVID. That's why the rates have dropped. So, you know, you see this kind of debate going on as well. So that's another kind of dimension to this narrative. And then the other dimension, of course, this is about oil palm, right? Because oil palm is, is the number one cause of of deforestation and fires and haze. As far as most people are concerned, and even the poll that we did with you guys indicate that, you know, 100%, all of you to find in the poll thing that oil palm is the main driver of fires and haze in Southeast Asia. But do the facts really back that up? So if you look at this, in terms of the percentage of deforestation that's caused by oil palm, yes in Malaysia is about 41.%, close to 50% of the deforestation, your deforestation s is due to oil palm, but that also means that there's another 50% that's caused by something else that's not open, and the percentage is even lower, for Indonesia where it's something like that. You know, less than 20% is caused by, by oil palm expansion. And let's not forget that in Indonesia, you have a lot more crops being planted and, and mining is also a huge thing that is being conducted. As you know, in Indonesia, one of the key drivers of the economy there. So there are some These are some of the other causes of the position there's not. And then if you go to the northern or the than other countries outside of Malaysia, Indonesia, then then the causes of deforestation be something else because you do you hardly have oil palm planted in Cambodia or in Myanmar, Vietnam or Laos. So they do something else. Like it could be rubber. It could be maize, sugarcane, some other kind of crop. Yeah. So it's important to bear in mind. And then if you see the flip side of it, which is how much of the oil palm expansion actually leads is actually on forest land, because there's a lot of war bandits planted. Many of the open plantations are quite old. Some of them are planted on on top of land that used to be planted with rubber or other crops. So you have crop crop kind of conversion, not necessarily forest crop. Yeah. So again, the picture differs from from country to country. And in Malaysia, you do still have quite a lot of oil palm that planted on that used to be forests, but then in some other countries, maybe the palm is planted in areas that will be planted something else. And then zooming in on Indonesia, specifically, Kalimantan in Sumatra, and just looking at hotspots. And this is where the fires and you can see that, yes, a substantial portion of the fires are in oil palm concessions. But you know, there are many other categories of land where the fires are located, you have fires in protected areas or conservation areas, you have fires in logging concessions, you have fires in non forested lands that are managed by individuals and communities, farmers basically. On pulpwood areas and so on. Right. So so it's not to say that the majority of hotspots are found within urban areas. So yeah, I mean, these these are the facts. I seem to be okay.

Siew Lyn Wong 1:07:33

Oh Surin, you've got another five more minutes.

Surin Suksuwan 1:07:36

Sure. I think you just take that five minutes, actually, I can effectively control my slide again, for some reason. Can somebody please come back back to the previous one. Ajinder, would you please control my slide? Because I can think they've lost control. Somebody is it on the law? Could you please move back to the previous slide? Cuz I for some reason I've lost control of the of the slides. Yeah. Okay, next please. I'm wondering whether the system there's a problem with my screen because I don't seem to see the slides moving. I'm sorry, but I can't control the slides now. That's okay , Surin maybe what you can do is just okay, Ajinder seems to be fixing it. Okay, if we could just move back to the last slide I was looking at and then we'll move on to

Ajinder Kaur 1:09:09

the next one?

Surin Suksuwan 1:09:13

No, can you move back please? To the slide that was not, 49 please.

Ajinder Kaur 1:09:29

This is the one.

Surin Suksuwan 1:09:31

Okay, can you go fullscreen on that? Nothing's happening on my side.

Siew Lyn Wong 1:09:54

Apologies everyone while we try and fix this little technical problem.

Surin Suksuwan 1:10:08

Siew Lyn, what are you seeing on your screen?

Ajinder Kaur 1:10:11

Right now?

Surin Suksuwan 1:10:12

Thank you. Yeah, if you don't mind, you can just, you know, stay on the controls because I seriously cannot control .

Ajinder Kaur 1:10:18

okay then you need to return the control then to me.

Surin Suksuwan 1:10:24

I don't even know how to do that.

Ajinder Kaur 1:10:25

Okay, no worries, I will sort it out. Just a minute. Yeah. Yeah.

Surin Suksuwan 1:10:31

Okay. So let me just continue. Yeah, sorry for the lost time. So you're still on this issue about the palm oil controversy. So I mean, despite the fact that I've shared with you, I mean, can be denied that there is a huge perception out there that palm oil is the main cause of deforestation, climate change on and as you could see briefly in the previous slide, just now the you know, those were some of the key campaigning NGOs and other stakeholders that have been driving this debate on palm oil and and some of them have taken quite interesting approaches in terms of address of highlighting the palm oil issue might have seen some of the campaigns that have been happening, keep on gains Nestle, for example, we have the killer cat, and there was splashed all over the media. Previously, you have campaigners climbing up to the bill to the headquarters of the Cargill building, the US and unfurling the banners and so on. Yeah. So next please. Next please. The slides don't seem to be changing.

Siew Lyn Wong 1:12:07

Okay. While we try and sort this out, I believe that all the participants have a PDF of the presentations, if you don't mind just referring to them in the meantime and Surin. Can you talk without referring to your slides and maybe just try.

Surin Suksuwan 1:12:24

I can refer to get to my own screen, So let's try that. Again, just bare with me moving the slides on on my own screen so that I can see what I'm talking about?

Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:12:52

Surin, would you like me to share the share the screen? And then I'll

Surin Suksuwan 1:12:56

I don't mind whoever they're sharing the screen. Alright, just wanted to work

Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:13:01

So what we'll do is I have this I have the slides with me now. And you just Could you tell me which slide number it was? I think it was 37. At that time. All right. Give me just one moment. Thank you. Alright, so was it further? 50. Maybe you can say 50. Again,

Surin Suksuwan 1:13:29

like on 50 and see my screen? I can't see any slides on my screen. Can you see this? I can't see anything. It's just gray.

Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:13:40

Yeah, okay. Well, I can tell you what, what the slide is right now. Right. Okay. Unless you would like to try sharing it.

Surin Suksuwan 1:13:49

Yeah, I can try sharing screen. Maybe, maybe want to just

Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:13:54

take control of the screen. All right. What I'll do is I'll stop sharing. Yeah.

Surin Suksuwan 1:14:03

How do I share screen? screen to find the icon to share screen? Anyway, let's, let's just continue. What
What can you see on your screen can please,

Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:14:22

Well currently, it's great. So I think what you're doing is you're sharing?

Surin Sukswan 1:14:27

No, no, I'm not. I'm not sharing any I didn't do it. Right. Okay. It's not my screen. Yes, it is. That's this
Ajinder's screen.

Siew Lyn Wong 1:14:33

Yeah, okay, Surin. Why don't you try just doing a verbal wrap up. Okay, could you could you try doing
that and then and then if it works again, we can come back to this again.

Surin Sukswan 1:14:46

All right. Let's do that. Thank you. So yeah, sorry about that. So basically, I was going to show some
slides about the companies that are involved in They're, they're already committed to to sourcing
sustainable more among these downstream companies, the big multinationals that are buying palm oil
and these are Nestle, Unilever, Mondelez, the unknown PepsiCo, many of the huge corporations that
you are aware of these are the major buyers from all they have committed to buying only sustainable
palm oil by the year 2020. And then in terms of the production side sound of major palm oil companies
that have committed to producing palm oil, these are the actual people who are planting the bomb.
These are the companies that have committed to producing sustainable palm oil include Asian agri,
Indo agri New Britain, Bama, Cargill MAS, Wilma, Sime Darby, IOI, some of these companies can get
you. So why they want to commit to certain palm oil because they can access the global markets. I
mentioned just now, some of the downstream companies, the consumer brands that have made the
commitment. So in order to be able to sell to these major users of palm oil, the companies need to
commit to producing the palm oil so that they can continue selling and continue their business. There's
also a growing stakeholder expectations out there that they do they want to buy only palm oil that is
produced sustainably, people are making a conscious decision, they're looking at the contents of
whatever they're buying, making sure that they're not buying something that actually is, has got
deforestation in the supply chain. So that's that's becoming a huge part of consumer behavior. And in
response, there have been the creation of a few farmers certification schemes have their own table for
such palm oil, rspo. Globally, and then you also have the Indonesian sustainable palm oil or is for the
mission sustainable model msbu. And within the RSPO principles and criteria, basically the RSPO
standards, there are provisions on on you know, new, no, no planting on paid on the reduction of
pollution and emission or not on the the avoidance of the use of fire in preparing the land. And also
making sure that any new planting does not cause deforestation, because when you think of it, I mean,
why would companies, plantation companies still want to use fire when clearing their land when
obviously, there's a lot to lose, right, because they can also lose their own oil palm trees that get burned
by the fire. They can lose their certification, they can be fined by the government. And and and these
days, there are many ways of disposing of the debris when you're clearing the land that you don't need
us by anymore. So you know, it's clear that the cost of fire is not not a simple thing, I mean, it's not just
a matter of the landowners setting fire. I mean, in Indonesia, for example, there has been shown that
quite a lot of the fires are caused by land speculators, I mean, they haven't got the ownership of the
land yet. But they want to return the forest or peatland into bear land so that they can claim the land
and say, Look, this, this land is clear, it's not forested, I want to plant something there. So there's a lot of

that going on as well, where, you know, the villagers might be working hand in hand with investors who are living in the city, and so on. So it's a very multifaceted kind of situation when it comes to who actually causes the fire. I'll just end with a little bit of information that I picked up from the rspo is the round table for SAS and palm oil. They have also started their own fire hotspot monitoring. And then in the year 2019, it was reported on their site that they detected 253 hotspots within the plantation areas of rspo members 153 out of 59,039 hotspots throughout Malaysia and Indonesia. So basically, only 0.39% of all hotspots detected at that particular point in time was actually coming from the palm plantations owned by RSP members, and the huge majority was actually detected elsewhere. So that's just yeah, give you an idea of the situation. And so I'll end there I'm sorry again for the technical hiccup and hopefully we didn't lose too much time. So thank you over to again Siew Lyn for q&a.

Siew Lyn Wong 1:19:49

No worries. Apologies again, Surin and apologies to everybody on the technical hiccup. They are trying desperately behind the scenes to fix it. So hopefully we We'll be able to, you know, just maybe afterwards, at the end, just go go through very quickly, your slides, but as Ajinder had said earlier, everybody should have a copy of the PDF of the slides. So you can actually refer to them to the slides that are in very, very carefully put together for you. Yeah. Okay. We're running a little bit over time. But maybe, perhaps we could just go with one question that I have. And really, it is to address this perception Surin. How do you how do you address this? How can media address this this bad perception that, you know, you talk about amazing figures that rspo certified plantations, such a small number of fires breaking out, and then they probably put them up very quickly. They're very transparent. They say, okay, we do have fires, but we put them out. And this is where they are blah, blah, blah, you know, and yet, it's like, Uh huh, you know, you're rspo certified, you should have zero fires. And then it becomes completed to the entire open industry everywhere, basically being responsible for fires, like how, how can this be addressed? Or can it not?

Surin Suksuwan 1:21:09

Yeah, I'm not sure to what extent can be there's certainly the, the media has a role to play. I'm not saying that you should suddenly all become oil palm champions. I mean, certainly the oil palm industry are not totally guilt free, they are still responsible for, you know, a significant amount of the deforestation. There are no, you know, angels in the industry, but it's just the imbalance that I think that we need to address right? Because there are causes, other causes of of deforestation, and haze. So if we are too palm oil fixated, you are losing sight on all the other drivers or the forestation, whether it's the maize growers, or the durian farmers, or, or the, you know, the sugarcane farmers, and so on. So that that's something that you need to keep in mind. Also, that's this north south kind of divergence, right? The global north, I mean, not not north and south within Southeast Asia, but the north and south, west, east and west, right? Because, for example, whenever whenever we have fires, forest fires happening in, in California, or in Australia, the narrative that you get is that oh, you know, people, they're losing their homes, the forests being cut, you know, being burned and all that kind of stuff. But you don't have the kind of anger that comes when fires are happening Southeast Asia, right? You don't have the whole world being angry at Southeast Asian saying, why are you having fires? And why are you not putting out your fires? Right? We don't have that kind of attitude towards the California solder says they have an environmental saying, hey, you're causing climate change, put out a fire, no, may not be tend to sympathize. Oh, you're very sorry that they're suffering. So why do we have that kind of difference in perceptions?

Siew Lyn Wong 1:23:07

No, absolutely. This is this is definitely food for thought. And, well, I think we are due for a break. So we're going to be we're going to have a 10 minute break. And maybe we'll cut it down to about five minutes. Go make your tea or coffee, go, you know, stretch yourselves and all the rest of it. And on the side, we'll try and fix the problem. So thank you very much, everyone, and we'll see you back at 3:05. Or sorry, 4:05 for big apartment going back to you. Okay, our 4:05 Malaysian time. Yeah, thank you very much. I will see you in a bit. Yeah. Adib do you have the screen up?

Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:23:45

Alright. Let me try something. So Can Can you see my screen now?

Siew Lyn Wong 1:23:54

Yes, I can.

Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:23:55

Alright. Gosh, okay. Okay, great. Okay, so that means this resolved. So from now on, what we can do is, I will be on the side. I'll, I'll change the slides for you. On this Helena or Mr. Larry, you still want to control your own. Share your own slides.

Larry Maramis 1:24:19

Larry, on my side, I think you can control it now. Okay, sure. I think it should be okay. There must have been some. I think configuration issues. Yeah. Unless sharing slides. But I think it looks fine now. So yeah.

Siew Lyn Wong 1:24:37

Can we go to Larry's slides, and just quickly show I did update it. And so I want to make sure. Sure, give me one moment. And then after that, Helena Helena, you still there? Yeah, I'm here. I will still share my own slides. Okay, so let's do Larry and then and then you just very quickly share your side just to make sure it's all there. Thanks so much.

Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:25:00

Right. So, Larry, here are your slides. Yeah.

Larry Maramis 1:25:04

So right. Okay, now you're going to give me control. I think let's see. Okay. Just go. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. So let

Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:25:13

You know that. Yeah. All right. So we have two options .

Larry Maramis 1:25:15

Yeah, we have the remote control option is a bit buggy. So maybe you want to like that. So just if you can just quickly zip through the slides and until and make sure it's just by, you know, quick cycle, it's okay to go to the next one. Next one. Next one. Next. Next, next, next, next, next, next. Next, next, next, next, blacks and they should be the last one. All right. Yeah. Yeah. They're trying to update it. Thanks a lot.

Siew Lyn Wong 1:26:03

Thank you very much. Yeah. And now Helena,

Dr. Helena Varkkey 1:26:07

shall I share my slides?

Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:26:09

So what you should be you should be able to share it with no problem.

Dr. Helena Varkkey 1:26:26

Yeah. Okay.

Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:26:35

All right. That's good.

Siew Lyn Wong 1:26:37

Okay, see you guys in five minutes if you want to take off Sure.

BREAK

Siew Lyn Wong

So Larry Maramis has extensive experience working with the ASEAN Secretariat, as well as various UN agencies, and most intriguingly he was actually there, present when some of these discussions, and the formulations of some of the tools to deal with trans boundary haze in ASEAN came into being, the birth there off. So he's got a real good insider's view. So you know direct any questions that you have to him. And let's see whether you answer them. But before that, let me please take it away. It's going to be a very interesting presentation. Thank you Larry.

Larry Maramis

Thank you, Siew Lyn, really appreciate being here with you. And having this opportunity to talk a bit based on my experience in the Transboundary Haze Pollution challenge that ASEAN has really been working with for several decades now. Let me, Maybe can start with the PowerPoint, or sorry the slides, Google Slides, wondering if it's already on. Oh yeah, you've got it. Okay, so what I tried to do, you can just go before one slide before just to refresh the audience's memories about what I'm supposed to be talking about well. My topic is on the politics of haze and in and of itself very complex issue. But in particular, with, with, with respect to the ASEAN organization, so I'll try to look in, in this presentation to really do a bit of a deep dive on under the regime institutions and the culture, specifically also the culture because I think that sort of permeates how ASEAN does business, and how it has been adjusting trans-boundary haze. Yes, next. So, to be a little more, I guess, creative, and this might be a experiment in futility, but what I'm trying to basically my first part will be talking about regionalism and how that evolved and how it has changed transboundary haze. And then the second part, I'll try to reverse that and say, and see how. And I'm already telegraphing my, my opinion on that is that is how transboundary haze has changed regionalism, and it has, as I'll be explaining a little later. It has certainly made its mark on on regionalism. But the other aspect of haze that it is also nice to add and move the bar, you might say on this concept of ASEAN centrality which essentially, you know, anything regional thing in our region that has to do with all of us all 10 of us in this case, Hopefully in some point or B 11 of us. This is a shout out to I do more or less stay friends and colleagues. We, there will also change this concept in notion of centrality and centrality is really deeply ingrained in in ASEAN

diplomacy, and its central tenets, as an organization, we'll see why later. And then, of course, how the changing concept of personality has changed transboundary haze itself. And we'll go to a discussion on whether the with the haze, the politics haze, Not just politics itself but the, the, the political economy, social aspects of haze had been transformative to the organization, or really a source of dysfunctionality, and I put it to you, we'll have hopefully a discussion after that. next please. To really understand ASEAN and really to get grounded in ASEAN I've been told that many of you are looking at the polls that some of you have really not been as exposed, and maybe this is a kind of a quick ASEAN one on one to understand us and it's really has moved, and is not a passive organization by all means it has changed. The change in good ways, but it has also changed in ways which are questionable. So as you know it started in 1967, with a Bangkok declaration, you have here, the peak of the Vietnam War, you had basically the region, and acting as the proxy, of the, the global forces at that time, and important leaders. Basically stood up and and tried to assert itself, and stand aside and you might remember, you're as old as me that there was a Southeast Asia Trade Treaty Organization that really tried to develop the political security context of it.

Larry Maramis

That was quickly dissolve, and this whole notion of an ASEAN Association, do support back in 67 with the initial four or five member states. So that's a very important landmark for ASEAN. Fast forward by a decade or so you have then the ASEAN Concord one. But here is the beginnings of trying to describe and and and basically stake out an identity for the region, and us and Concord really is an attempt to say well these. Well, two out outline the the parameters of what was later known as open regionalism. So, here you have Development Corporation initiatives, which are based on the Treaty of Amity and cooperation which is the founding treaty of the organization. Basically it sets out the terms of exchanges of cooperation. And also, it helped to outline what it needs and wants through its external relations. Now, Several days later, you have the organization, really think about, think hard about what it really wants to be. An ASEAN that is integrated but in doing what what purpose they are saying Concord tries to essentially map these things out, they already identify three pillars and you know and ASEAN is when, when they talk about three pillars, it's really about the political security, the economic, the social cultural pillars, and these have now action plans they are linked to the million Declaration the main development goals. And underpinning that is the Russian vision of 2020, and an action plan that helps to also solidify that. And because the new members of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam has come in. There is also what they call the initiative for us and integration, specifically for helping the other new member states who are very diverse in terms of not just income but in terms of ideology philosophy state philosophy and so on, to, to come to a common ground through this initiative. And, of course, you really had us and establish itself as a regional platform through the ASEAN Regional Forum. And this, Southeast Asia, nuclear free nuclear weapons free zone. So fast forward again another decade you have then ASEAN redefining itself as a, as an, as a regional mechanism that is of the response to particular to a global, global public goods so you have now, several years before that you have the ASEAN charter, a new foundation that is beginning Development Cooperation starts beginning to assist the ASEAN countries through what is called the Community roadmap. And that was in 2009 to 2015. Fast forward today. You have now in 2015 Of course you had the announcement of an asset community. So ASEAN now is a community that's the formal terminology if you want to call it that, but now it has a bigger vision. We're going to the vision now, but you could see what was important is that it does evolve through a much more standardized institutional framework, processes, and a lot of the activities are aligned through these community blueprints the three communities the political security and economic as well as the socio cultural community were much more performance, I guess, oriented results oriented. Next please. So in the first two decades really ASEAN has been doing sort of

regionalism light, right 1.0 And there, it took its cue from many regional thinkers, and in a to develop a, an organization that really followed what is called, what was called then functionalism, which was a really a forerunner of globalization, theory and strategies, and the thinking really focused on. Yes, a cooperative arranger to, to deal with day to day interstate affairs, but also to open up avenues of supporting each other in health, education, and some trans boundary concerns, and among those early trans boundary concerns was pollution. So this is important to know and it's also notable that during those years. What is now so called socio cultural community was then called functional cooperation so you do have a very strong link with political science theory international relations theory that is very evident, it's, it's not surprising because we do have the diplomats regional diplomats really charter the course and laid the foundation for last year. Again. Fast forward some further decades you have what is called Neo fashion. You have what is called National functionalism, And that really takes the cue.

Larry Maramis 1:27:11

And you have what is called national functionalism and that really takes the cue from the European experience European Economic Cooperation, the common market there and for a long time, ASEAN thinkers were seen as modeling that European experience, this Neo functionalism experience, but the biggest change I think in ASEAN thinking in terms of how the organization should involve was really the the Brundtland report and as the the report by the by the former prime minister of Norway Brundtland, who, who also chaired this world Commission on Environment and Development, it was back in 1987, it had a very long lasting impression on the volume, the body politic, the political discourse going on in ASEAN about what is this organization? What should we, we what are we all about? And there as you may recall, the Brundtland report really looked at economic growth. They looked at the sexually identified sustainable development. So the language of sustainable development began to be absorbed by the region, the the Asian community, and I'm talking about here really the, the the intergovernmental community, and even the concept of sustainable communities. So Brooklyn talked about sustainable communities. And this was a very attractive idea, the idea that there are not just one community, but many. And so it has to be founded on multilateralism, interdependence, not just sustainable development, but all that supports economic growth, economic protection, and social equality. So you do have a much more expansive understanding of international norms that gain currency among ASEAN thinkers. Next, please. So at the same time, this growing body of people, as I call the the functional cooperation is, maybe you can call them, they began to shape regionalism in a different way, in the Brundtland way, if you want to call it that. They looked at social cultural, so everything that's not political, everything was not economic, would be under them. That's the function of the idea of functionalism and that it would be looking at developing development or sectoral cooperation with this old, old fashioned idea of taking cooperation among development countries tcdc that became passe as you know and has really been overtaken by this concept of south south cooperation. So, that has been a very much within the ethos and the driving force of the social socio cultural community, the growing or the nascent socio cultural community. But even within those two decades, there was a feeling of being the third child feeling of not being the most well regarded pillar because much of the lead was taken by the political security and economic cooperation, do you see that, that very much a in the, in the collective mood of those who are driving the ASEAN social cultural community, but certainly it's rooted in functionalism Neo functionalism is called let's say the whole idea of integration of an economic integration and flows by globally, globalization, globalization, as you know, globalization really gained currency in the last two, three decades, because of the concept of global value chains of interdependence into productivity, the digital and all the the, the changes that were in the so called disruptive technologies that globalization introduced. Now, why am I, emphasizing this so much, because in the end, because of, I guess, institutional needs realisation of regionalism in ASEAN, the

ASEAN social cultural community evolve, and it controls in effect, how it interfaces with the other pillars, it acts in the sense of gatekeeper and so this is a this is a important cultural element or dimension in understanding ASEAN, we have three pillars, rightly or wrongly, this is how the founders charted the course. And and now, one pillar is where all that action is trans boundary, Hayes happened to be under the socio cultural community next. So, now, while social culturalism, or the social cultural community was was expanding from an initial of three years, so sectors Health, Education, Labor, and it started expanding to something over 20 sectors now. But while he was doing this consolidation of all its efforts, and this blueprint, of course, the real dupla political landscape was, was driven by economic regionalism, and this is what I think part of where serines presentation also focused on where they were, where the tendency is now to look at a much more integrated ASEAN, but in a very economic point of view. Why was that? Well, one was the fear of fortress Europe, Europe was becoming a block in itself, a market the marketplace, where you had to do business through this one window, Europe. And there were obviously conditions we had to fulfill, to partner with Europe. But also in that, that that time period of the early 90s, late late 80s, you had the North American Free Trade Agreement. And the member states started getting very, very concerned that they will be missing out, they'd have to also promote themselves as a better union. And Thailand stepped up and said, Well, you know, let's not go into necessarily professional trade agreements, let's go to much wider, comprehensive all encompassing, after that's the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement. This is important to understand, because it's actually based on this broader economic regionalism that you had ASEAN multinational companies, the tariff plans of the world, you know, the Asia Pulp and papers and many of the actually Asian based multinational corporations, as national corporates began to assert themselves and be part of the body politic. And you see much more in that later on. So there's also a fear of China. China's not something new back in the late 90s, they were very fearful that ASEAN was basically sucking up the the foreign investments. And so, Singapore, as always the case in terms and these issues, certainly stood up and said that we have to begin developing this concept or notion of the economic community. So this, this, this early beginnings of economic neuro regionalism can be, can be really traced to Singapore's own concerns, of course, it led in terms of export economy, but also how it saw the world around it. And it's also important to point out that the G five at that time. So the they had a plaza accord, which essentially, US was complaining about the trade imbalances, the trade deficits, isn't that an interesting thing, because you know, it has haunted us for a while now, but in a new iteration, you had, basically, the US complaining about the German, and the, the value of the Japanese yen, the German Deutsch and Deutsche Mark. And the Japanese yen, and they wanted a new accord that would allow that, well, that immediately changed the flow of FDI. So these are important issues to remember. Because once you start opening up FDI, you also have you have an add on effect that piggyback in tandem effect that our own regional based company companies were able to exploit exploit very well, because then you had these large conglomerates, these large syndicates and in Consortium's they, they they began the early beginnings of a state, private sector or transnational sector, transactional corporations, who already was already beginning to set an internally Asya Indonesia, again, in Asia, but not about trans boundary haze in nature was because oil price fell in the late 80s. And it started to shift to export orientation. Now, Thailand, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, had already started that, but Indonesia was always the late comer. And it began to shift that changed also the whole outlook of ASEAN to become much more of this economic community. You can also thank cunanan Banjara, when you return in the early 90s, who basically nice to us and to agreed after. Not, it's not unusual or not not surprising that Indonesia was basically pushed, you know, kicking and screaming, to agree to the after terms. And, of course, once again, in Asia was a critical to upheavals politically, because in the 1998 1997, you didn't only have cranberry haze, you also had the financial crisis. And Indonesia, of all the ASEAN countries was hit. And Malaysia under Prime Minister on my tear, really wanted to espouse this

to bring this ASEAN vision 2020 out a very, I think, enlightened vision. And we have to credit Malaysia for pushing that. Next slide.

Siew Lyn Wong 1:38:52

I'm sorry, Larry. Yes, yeah. Hi, giving you another 10 minutes. So yep. If you could, you know.

Larry Maramis 1:39:01

Yeah, I'm almost finished with Yeah. I'll be going very quickly. So the idea then here is that the the the the point is making basically our sins open, regionalism really went through a lot of changes. It has benefited from the kind of political influence that it has in the so called distributed leadership. At one time, Suharto would be calling the shots, another martir and then Ramos and so on. So they did really set in stage the, the, the foundation of this open regionalism, and although a lot of people talk about the ocean way, it's really now we talk more about the ASEAN centrality where anything regional really has to do really has to, to, to be to be through open sensis approach and through through the 10 agreeing on what the direction of the region is. You begin to see also the beginnings of institutional culture. I think helina was landmark work on on the politics of haze and regionalism, environmental regionalism, I think, is splendid in that and I think it really bears further review and reading. Next phase. Yeah, so, okay, in terms of how transboundary haze changed regionalism, so we talked a bit about how regionalism began to change. transboundary haze, but transboundary, haze had a very important role in changing it to right back in 99, you already had the Kuala Lumpur accord on environmental Environment and Development 1990. And that really had a very important role, important opponent on transboundary pollution. You also had the Singapore summit, that said, either identified trans boundary pollution as a primary primary environmental concern, okay, we're not talking about just a concern. It's a primary concern. So so you could see the the increasing escalation of transboundary pollution as a concern. And you then have the first ascent cooperation plan in 1994. And a year after that, the formation of the haze technical Task Force. So you can see a progression in the in the way that the organization had considered haze, already in the early 80s, you had some major outbreaks, but not so much major because as you know, a few years later, next slide, please. Few years later, in 97, and 98, you had these major outbreaks, we'll get into that, but because it was really sadly, briefly covered by Surely, 9 million hector's were basically taken out of existence. And largely in those countries that you see listed. It was estimated the loss would be 6 billion, but there's been many studies since that we visited looked at the methodologies etc, that you can find, you know, even science history, the same could be could sometimes be very, I should say, not, not absolute. So the economic even the economic loss, estimates of those days have been challenged. But against that was the Asian financial crisis, as you know. And that, that caused a lot of pain in terms of how I send sees itself, but how I say it addresses the issue of transboundary haze. Next slide. So you then have this very quickly in succession after these different cooperation, agreements, frameworks were done all these different plans. So you had the original Hayes Action Plan, which was my own personal experience in the in the negotiations and the region of the negotiation before present. And you'll see the the after that, of course, three years after that was the ICN peatland management initiative. Why did that happen? Because the regional haze action plan really covered more responses. If you looked at emergency responses, there was prevention, but there was more mitigating and monitoring. And it didn't have a legal framework behind it. We have a legal muscle that only came in November 2003, with the ASEAN agreement on transboundary, haze pollution, which had was which is still considered the most the only the only environmental agreement that the region really has. And that covers monitoring, assessment and prevention, technical cooperation, scientific scientific research, mechanisms for coordination, lines of communication, simplified Customs and Immigration procedures for disaster relief. So moving of

supplies and materials to help combat case two years after that, again, the the the results of the asset peatland management initiative came about and resulted in the RCMP land management strategy which provided this common framework specifically for Pete. Right. And in September 2013. You notice almost close to a decade has gone until another program comes up that really looked at stakeholders. So there are several stakeholders, including government, private sector committees and civil society to achieve the goals of the PMS. Finally, you have in August 2016, this roadmap on I think cooperation towards transparency, haze pollution control with means of implementation, that is, in shorthand is called ASEAN, and the ASEAN history roadmap that provides much more strategic or action oriented time bound frameworks, etc. If you look at this time, this chronology, you could see a lot of concerns, of course, in 97, concurrent with the, the fires, you had this action plan. So there was a an attempt to, to respond, and there were some mobilization of of efforts. But there was not a scientific basis to look at any, it was really left up to the API to help and focus on the issue of peatlands. Without a legal foundation was difficult to enforce, to monitor to draw sanctions. And that was the, the the, the that is why the ASEAN agreement on transboundary pollution or the hdhp was required. You see a progression on that, but you also see a reactive approach where where, oh, we forgot about haze, you know, we should have a common strategy about managing the peat. And then, yeah, you know, we've worked with the stakeholders, and yet, we did not provide the kind of supporting framework they would have. And then, oddly enough, you have this roadmap that says, Yeah, this should be the broader thing. So from 97 to 2016, you had this, I send drawing up a structure almost piece by piece, piecemeal, and with a lot of gaps in some cases. Yeah, next. And so you have this, this agreement. The agreement, of course, contains these measures, which already described, but it also on the right column there, it also foresaw the establishing of this ASEAN Coordinating Center, this is very vital, it really is the linchpin for the management and control of the operations. For a while you had the standard operating procedures that were developed, and the linkage with ACC, and the National monitoring centers that were originally established much later, by the way, they were National Action Plans, but they lacked an institutional support mechanism. And these national monitoring centers were evolved. Much later. We talked a bit of a SMC, but time actually is constrained me, I will just simply say that acmc was, was a facility that actually predated and ran concurrent to the transboundary haze, it didn't look at haze, specifically, that provides me logical information for a bunch of things such as civil, civil, and military navigation, but also in terms of agro meteorology, planning for, for agriculture, and Forestry. So performed a number of functions before it was called upon to focus also on the haze. And also, at that time, you already had huge technological development and progress in, you know, remote satellite imagery, and so on. So is the premier facility in ASEAN. As for this, there are also issues. We can talk about that later.

Siew Lyn Wong 1:49:04

Yeah, so maybe, maybe you could end here. So this, this is a really good place to just end. And we could come back to maybe your other points later. Thank you very much for that very, very comprehensive journey. And thank you for explaining the processes. You know, how ASEAN works, really, but perhaps we could get some interventions from the other panelists as well. And there's a question here, too. Basically, you spoke at the ASEAN ways famous ASEAN way, right? To what extent has this policy of non interference either helped or hindered the process of dealing with transboundary haze issues?

Larry Maramis 1:49:50

To help say that, again, the how it helped or hindered? Yeah, this is the concept of addition to be looked at in the context of the concept of centrality, right centrality is that the definition of regional activities will be, will be undertaken through a, through the 10th, through the consensus of the 10. But

within the consensus, that consensus is also driven by their own national perceptions and national interests. And so undermining our subsuming that centrality is really national sovereignty. So what what drives that national sovereignty? Well, national interests first, then comes regional interests and see what the what the what the how the negotiations pan out? Right, I think, to look at the question, you know, this policy is a bit nuanced in some cases, right? There are obviously some countries that are very much, you know, they cannot drive or they can only influence international affairs or external affairs, if they only are focused on national self interest. What is self interest, national self interest for something like Singapore, which is very export oriented as an open economy? It's attracting advanced research industries. And, and and studies in science, would that work? in international relations setting? Of course it would not. And that's why there are, you know, how non interference works, works in different ways. And it's usually a factor of how open that economy is, and how liberal that economy is, and how much depended on on, on on foreign foreign investments. Because, you know, to me, the idea of foreign non- interference is almost, you know, almost not even, is a non starter when you talk about non ferrous, because they, because most countries now are most ASEAN countries. Now, as I told you, Indonesia made that big jump to become much more export oriented, you don't have national interest, there was national interest have become trumped use probably a very bad, you know, pun, to, by, by international interest, just by the nature and characteristics of our economies. So, it has not now in the early stages, right, you know, there was a lot of nationalism, I was there, I was in these meetings where, you know, people are shouting each other, you know, you know, my, you know, my farmers are suffering, my, you know, my people are suffering, and so on and so forth. And you you can't believe the language that was hurled at each other. And I'll be maybe a subject of memoirs, for those who are at the negotiating table. But since I was behind those who are behind in the negotiating table, or speeding information on them, I can assure you, these were not easy negotiations, they definitely brought up, you know, their national interests. And that was the beginning of okay. This is important. This is the time when people had put up their, you know, basically explained what their real damage and what were hurt has caused has been caused by John's Mercedes. And that became difficult because he had to bring up evidence they have to look at, you know, maps, they had to look at telemetry, satellite imagery. So the later on with this, the the language, the tone became a little more subdued and a little more professional. Just a little.

Siew Lyn Wong 1:54:12

A little is great. I think, you know, when you've got 10 countries and everybody putting sort of nation first thing, no color addressing the issues that were raised earlier in the session as well. Yeah, Helena, I wonder whether you you have any thoughts on what Larry has just said, or indeed his presentation, because you've been privy to, to a new study actually done quite a research on how works.

Muhammad Adib Faiz 1:54:41

Sorry, Helena, you need to unmute your mic.

Dr. Helena Varkkey 1:54:44

Sorry about that. Yeah. So far, Larry, of course, has the benefit of having all the first hand experience so I'm sort of an external commentator or observer, but what I have been thinking about quite a lot since there was there was a point question on the ASEAN way, is sort of how we understand the ASEAN way, whether it is sort of something that the countries are bound to, or whether it is something that countries set kind of use to their advantage when as it when necessary. So I think this is something that we can contextualize it here is quite well. So sometimes when you see it suits certain countries, we will see that then countries kind of forget about the ASEAN way. For example, you sometimes Singapore has been

accused to be very brash in how they talk about his and how they, how they demand things and all that. And if you look at the definition, probably that could be considered, you know, this is not very asked yet. But at the same time, sometimes the other way around work. So a country will suddenly claim that, you know, we have to strictly follow the ASEAN ways, it's extremely important. And this has been come up, this has come up during his negotiations as well, in relation to sharing maps. So sovereignty issues has been brought up. So I think the ASEAN way is an interesting lens to view, ASEAN and also to view the haze, not only in terms of me to think about it, like has it become so ingrained in the ASEAN culture that we can't think of another way to function in ASEAN? Or is it just something of a tool for governments to use to suit their interests of the binary has, of course, raised the issue of national interest? So maybe we can leave it at that. And we can see, are there any others? Any other author journalist may have some thoughts on this as well?

Siew Lyn Wong 1:56:43

Yeah, thank you very much for that. Helena. At the moment, no, this is another question from audience. But before we get to that, actually, Sun, I'd like to ask you for your thoughts on what Larry has presented.

Surin Suksuwan 1:57:01

And thanks again, and thanks very much for that very thought provoking presentation. Lee, certainly for most of us who are not at the negotiating table, we can only imagine what actually goes on there. So I think you've given us an idea of the kind of complexity that's faced by the ASEAN negotiators. I'm curious as to whether to an extent, the response to the haze issue, and you can see from Larry's slides previously, where there have been a number of treaties, agreements that are second level related to the, the haze and feet and so on, right. So my question is, I mean, to what extent have they been? So what what, what has led to this kind of response? Is it mainly due to pressure from people in the in the individual countries as in? Is it a ground up kind of impetus? Or was it mainly due to the test, not technocrats that are involved in negotiations? Was it really driven by the leaders or the different economies? Or the international pressure? So always in a mix of? So it will be interesting to find out?

Siew Lyn Wong 1:58:30

It's great. Yeah, good question. Soon, I'm just gonna interject a little bit nerdy, because this is very similar to what I did has also asked like, who, who makes the final decisions, who who are the ultimate arbiters arbiters in the process? Thanks.

Larry Maramis 1:58:48

Your final decision makers? Well, you know, this is the this the issue was I was also about to make in actually the next slide that I would have presented to you. And the easier the problem here is that the externalization of environment has, has allowed the technocrats to kind of hit hide behind strategies, action plans, and, and the management thereof, right, and the coordination mechanism. So, you had this layering of who does what and why and when and why. And, and then you have essentially a diffusion or a dispersion of accountability. So there is, you know, when, when we and this is the problem with international agreements, generally. There's a cherry picking as to what an organization a country can do, right? That happens even un conventions, but also on the VA thp. So, you know, the question the the my answer to who has the last word In the end, nobody does. Because the the terms of the framework is so vague sometimes that it doesn't describe responsibility to one person or one country. That wouldn't happen. That's that is not the right. You know, it's, you know, the ASEAN way is, look, if it's all for one One for all, why are you blaming me? You are responsible, equally responsible. Right?

So that is kind of the the be excuse often given not so much national sovereignty. It's like, it's more that, you know, we started this together, you know, you can't say all the all the initiatives you put together, were in place, you're supposed to my capacity here, and it didn't happen. So they actually will tell you that Well, I mean, in Cambodia, you know, the monitoring capacity is X amount of percent, as compared to, you know, Philippines or something like that. So you get that into those number games. And in the end, it's, it's, it's, it's the lowest common denominator again, right? You say? Well, in that case, you know, rather than saying such such country was at fault, that whole there's a whole systemic issue that is at fault. So this is the problem with this. It's, it's the ability have so much the ability, but the the conventions and the agreements that are made are such that it lacks real sanctions, right? It really lacks accountability as to who should be responsible for what, and you might have leads, but they're not the ones who are accountable necessarily. They're the ones who lead so there are other parts of the pieces that need to, to do their job. And if they don't do it, then it's not the leads fault, right. That's the problem with with these agreements, they're so complex, so bureaucratic, as some multi layered, that is very difficult to really make a deep dive as to who's at fault, who's responsible? Right, you need a new generation of frameworks and agreements that really are much more results oriented, much more accountable, has sanctions, you know, has enforcement's you know, and addresses this institutional culture with which we kind of sidestep this institutional culture that is prevalent in these large organizations. The UN has famous faces that and, you know, ASEAN is no different.

Siew Lyn Wong 2:02:47

That's, that's, that's, that's really, really honest. And a great insight. We look forward to your memo. The lots of bias here of your, for sure, yeah. But talking of thank you very much for that, Mary. I'm going to move on now we'll come back to your points, many, many different points I'm sure you know, to pick up on. But talking of accountability, let's move on to helenus. Presentation now. Helena is Senior Lecturer in the department of international Strategic Studies at the University of Malaya in KL. Her research, she is a real, she's a real pro at this whole thing. We had a question come through the Google form, asking about the connection between politics or governance and, and, you know, deforestation. Let's listen to her. Her research is very, very deep. She wrote a book called, sorry, she wrote a book called his problem. So is Asia, palm oil and patronage. So there's no one better to talk about patronage and understanding backdoor deals or side door deals, or things beneath the surface. And she's going to try and address accountability. Helena, now the floor is yours.

Dr. Helena Varkkey 2:04:06

Okay, thank you very much. I'm going to try and share my screen now. All right, so I probably will not focus so much on patronage but I will talk a bit about governance as we go along. But um, how I have decided to approach today was to talk about certain concepts that I think might be something appealing or something relatable to the public when we talk about haze basically drawing attention to what has been some of the interesting trends that I've seen, observing haze for the past 15 years of how it's been talked about in the media and how we can relate things to certain international relations concepts and certain political science concepts that could probably help to substantiate Some of the stories that you might think of doing. So one angle that I felt was quite interesting, was actually on, give me a minute, I want to try and put my time as I was actually on whether we think about these kinds of things as crimes Or environment, environment pollution, is it thought about as a crime today? Because that's not actually something that is 100% accepted the idea of an environmental problem, is it a crime not, so I'm going to look at it from the context of human dignity and human rights, and we can see what important concepts could be related to this. So the idea of whether humans have a right to a healthy environment, this might seem quite obvious to you, but actually, it is not recognized as much as you think. So this

idea that the environment is a prerequisite to the enjoyment of human rights, if you think about it, what is human rights about, you know, the right to live a good and comfortable life, basically. But, of course, you will need to have a good environment to do so. So we talked about the effects of haze and how haze is one of the things on air pollution, being one of the major killers, and major easily avoidable killers. So obviously, haze would be in a way, cutting into our rights as human beings. So related to this idea of, of environmental rights, there's things like the right to a safe, healthy and logical, ecologically well balanced environment. So whether or not this should be recognized as a human right. And also, when you think about it, certain other human rights, for example, access to information, participation in decision making access to justice, all this is actually dependent on having a good environment. So without that we are blocked from, from accessing other rights as well. So the environment is really essential for us to have a healthy human rights ecosystem. So the whole idea about linking human rights and human well being to the environment, we could argue that you started out in 1972, with the Stockholm declaration, and together with the real declaration down the road, it kind of brought about this understanding that, you know, that we that governments need to somehow take care of their people, and not only their people, the people around the world as well. So the concept that, well, it gave rise to this international law concept that goes along the lines of whatever happens in your country, you have to make sure that it does not cause harm to another country. So this is where we start thinking about this responsibilities in relation to transport and re pollution and the responsibilities that come with it from from one country to the other. So it is look at the UN, the universal declaration for human rights, article three mentioned that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. But it doesn't actually mentioned environment per sake, directly. And if you look at the ASEAN human rights declaration, I think, you know, because it's in an earlier or other in a more recent environment, if you can call that there has been more of an acceptance of this concept of environment being part of the human rights. So the article 28 f states that, you know, the humans or ASEAN people or the people of ASEAN, have the right to a safe, clean and sustainable environment as well. And we have other related related declarations that, that go along these lines, for example, the Singaporean solution on environmental sustainability and climate change, the common stand on on uncd, as well. And I think they all recognize the importance of environment for human rights. So interestingly, this has also become quite a rather, you can see it in a few in constitutions around the world. If you look at a Malaysian constitution, it's not that Malaysia does not mention anything about the environment in their constitution. It does say something about the right to life, but not particularly the environment. But interestingly, Indonesia has this in its in its constitution, so every person should have the right to live in physical and spiritual prosperity, to have a home and to enjoy good and healthy environments. So this is in the Constitution of Indonesia. So it would be interesting thing for all of you to go back and have a look at your own constitutions to see what what do they say or do they say anything about the environment. So this is a quote that I have gathered, and I'll be showing you some quotes that I've gathered over the years, which I thought was quite interesting and connects to this idea about human rights and crime. So this is something by the former Singapore environment. Minister Vivian Balakrishnan So he said this, this is not a natural disaster. So this was in relation to his. This is vandalism against society, against the environment, and ultimately against ourselves a man made tragedy and a crime. So this is an interesting comparison to natural disasters, because he talks about this is not a natural, he makes it a different thing. He said, we're not talking about, let's say, typhoons, or we're not talking about, we're not talking about earthquakes talking about something that's not natural. So that's why he made the relation to crime. So I think this was a very important statement to make, because a lot of people still may not be able to, to understand that haze is actually something that is not necessary, not not necessarily natural. And of course, you know, the severity of the haze depends on the weather, if you have a dry year, like if you have a bad El Nino year, the haze is worse, if you have, if

you have lania, it becomes less. But the essential drivers are not natural. The extent would depend on these on these on these, you know, and muskerry rhythms. But the drivers are still very much human as we go into the law. And there has been other commentators saying describing this as the biggest environmental crime in 21st century. So we talked, the other speakers talked about orangutans and all this. And, of course, the link to it to climate change has been made as well, I think something really easy for us to envision how much actually Surin has mentioned, when p is dried and exposed, it starts the process of, of co2 being released. And that is where a country like Indonesia, for example, which isn't very, doesn't really have much industrial contribution to co2, because you know, the biggest contributors are US, China, which are mainly industry. But a country like Indonesia or Malaysia, we could be contributing so much to this through just exposure and depletion of our carbon sinks. So that is that is really turning its head on this idea about industrialization driving climate change. Moving on, so this is there's this, this is not something that's only being said by other countries, like for example, if Singapore would see it, or in Malaysia will say, or Thailand will say, that hasn't been the case. We also see commentators and even government officials from Indonesia has been using this kind of language to describe what has been happening. So this is somebody from the by the national bulan-bulan becana. So I think it's like Nash, Nash, Nash natural disaster agency. So he has described it as a crime against humanity of extraordinary proportions. So when you think about it, actually, the people who are closest to the fires, they're the ones who suffer the most. So it's quite a, it's quite a start to see that, you know, the people who are, we may face haze in Malaysia, but the people who are really the most affected are those in Sumatra, Kalimantan, who are really just next to it. So, back to this concept about a crime against humanity. So if you look at the definition, under customary international law, this has been used to describe things like slavery, appetite, rape, sexual violence, this kind of stuff. So, it basically means actually are deliberate, they are deliberately committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directly on any civilian population during peace or war. But when you think about it, actually, should we start considering environmental crimes as such, because if you think about it, environmental crimes, they are caused by most of the time human activities, whether direct or indirect and, and, and we know what we are doing human beings know what we are doing. So, you know, sort of understanding it this way makes it really something that to kind of communicate the urgency and the need to really start thinking about this as a real big issue, and not just a side effect of development. You know, just a side story. We, we ran a survey before to ask something along the lines of is a certain amount of environmental pollution acceptable, an acceptable payment or an acceptable side effects of, of development in KL and the surprising thing was about I think, was like 30 to 40% actually said, Yes. So, you know, this is something that perhaps we have to start thinking about how society understands Environment and Development, right. So if you don't think this is something, it's just a big problem, and it's something that you just have to deal with as a developing country. So this is a picture about the, I think, a very arresting picture of entire an entire house, a mountain on fire in Chiangmai. And I have a good friend who lives there. And yeah, so it's, it's really when you look at it, it's terrible. And this is not even on peatlands, right. It's in Thailand. And it just shows that, again, it's not just a southern problem, you know, it also happens in the metro area. And equally, or, or I mean, just as bad or even worse than what we have here. so serious. So definitely the people of Chiangmai, you know, what are their rights, right? And coming back a bit to to Indonesia, these are some figures of what were the human costs of his. And what I do want to call to your attention to is the 19 deaths at the top. So this was actually caused some controversy at the time. Because around the time where the speakers were released, a few years later, scientists had done some research. And they actually said that this 19 deaths are super, super underreported. And they said that the range, the actual range of deaths related to 2015, haze was about 40 to 100,000. That's not 40 to 140, to 100,000. So we can see here that there's a lot of underreporting going on. And the reason why the figures were so were so small, the official figures

was because these figures were the people who officially dropped during the haze due to lung issues. So, of course, that would have been probably 19th. Fair enough, you know, those people who also were close by to the haze, but we take other considerations, people who were very sick before became extremely sick because of the haze and dilator, for example, or people who started to get sick because of the haze and had fallen had problems following that, even beyond the haze season, taking all those into account, there's a much bigger number of effects on on to the human well being in the impact. And that study actually covered not only Indonesia, but also Malaysia and Singapore as well. So the effects are really quite, quite broad. This is a picture which perhaps you would have seen taken during the 2019 haze in Rio. And I think you guys will remember the red sky phenomenon in real. And actually, just to mention, I was in I was in Sydney for a few years for my studies. And there was one day that I woke up to exactly this as well, a red sky in Sydney. So you may not think that this happens elsewhere, but it does as well. And it happened before this happened in Rio. So yeah, it just shows how, how much of an impact it can have. And, you know, Sydney at the time, they were having they were having their own phone, wildfires, and as well. Um, so basically, where are our rights to a good and healthy environment and in most importantly, who should uphold these rights. And back to the back to the core of the person from from the net, national natural disaster agency, National Disaster agency. So he made this statement before saying that 99% of these fires are lit intentionally. So the question comes, are they deliberate? And to what extent are they deliberate? And I must say that this quote was taken about 2015. And I think things have changed on the ground a lot. So like what Surin has talked about? And I want to call your attention a bit to this, this question about intentionality in in the fires and how we can interpret that. And I think this is another avenue for sort of investigative journalism in this problem, because a lot of things are developing laws, things are changing on the ground, a lot of lot of patterns on the ground is shifting. And I think it's very important for us to dig down and for you guys to be done assemblies to get the real story. So if we look back at the definitions of the crimes against humanity, the definition as well as its it, sometimes it can be part of government policy or white practices of atrocities tolerated or condoned by a government. So we see that there's a bit of responsibility, or at least quite a bit of extra responsibility put on the government. And this is where I want to bring in governance issues. And I want to talk a bit about what Surin also touched on about peak drainage and about how things have changed. So in the in the past before pre rspo. Companies would have been burning and and that was acknowledged A long time ago. However, you know, once people started to realize once they have a lot of media exposure about these people getting angry at the companies, a lot of these big companies have stopped doing Because they just can't afford to have the bad, the bad publicity attached to it. So there's been a lot of change as soon as a lot of these companies have adopted rspo rspo doesn't allow you to burn rspo doesn't allow new plantings on peat. But the key here is that the the key still key, why I say that is because these companies, they established themselves on key. And you know, one cycle of karma is 2025 years. And they are they're, the very fact that you are on Pete makes it verifiable, there's no two ways around it, if you are, that means you are just contributing to the risk. So companies, usually they have a lot of money to maintain, they have their they have their fire energy particular firefighting teams, and they have their people, the engineers to monitor the water levels and all that. But the problem is that P dorms are usually very large. So you can see this image here, because the reason why I showed this, which is the same one I believe that Surin has shown is that even though you see that the ditches has been dug only on the left side, you will see that eventually the whole Quito becomes dry and drained and the whole peat dome becomes destroyed. So this is one of the problems of governance that was in the past with Indonesia. And even with Malaysia, peat, peat ecosystems were not considered a unitary ecosystem. So you would have situations where plantations were given land, or let's say half the peat dog, and they would take care of it relatively well. But then you would have this interesting thing where you would have fires just outside the plantations. So why is

that happening? That is because the peak norm is such a way that even though when you drain one side, the other parts get dry as well. So you would have these fires that are outside the plantations, or you would have villagers who work or who are living around the plantations, they're just trying to grow their plants and their their crops and all that, but something happens there. And because the land is already dry, because of the drainage that had occurred, the fire because fire starts. So because of that there's a lot of indirect effect. And so I think this is something that we need to understand. So when I went for my fieldwork, something really interesting that I found was that villagers who were living close to plantations, they actually complained. And they said, because the plantations are taking care of their water levels in their plantations, so well, the villagers don't have enough water during the dry season, because all the water is stuck in the plantations collectively don't want the fire to occur there. So there's all of these knock on effects. And and the fact still remains the law, these plantations have been there and are going to be there for a long time. And because of that, you have to these are things that you have to actually go and talk to people to find out the real story, it's not just a straightforward story of somebody lighting a fire, it's a lot of these other stories as well. And you know, when plantation is established, people will come, the roads are built, if the peatland was not open, nobody would even go there. So it's all about, you know, the the pros and cons about opening up and then managing it or just not opening it up at all. That's what I think continues to be a problem. And yeah, so this is just you know, how it looks like. Currently, Indonesia is moving towards a hydrological unit way of governing peatlands, and this is, I think, on the right direction, because what it means is, they're not going to start giving up, like Half Dome has to be managed as a whole, not just partly, so they're moving towards better forms of management. And I know I'm running a bit out of time, so I'll try and go a bit faster. So you know, these are some some of the laws that exist in Indonesia, for example, fires are not allowed to it's an environmental crime basically, is in the law. However, if you see recently, the omnibus law that everybody talks about, it removes the strict liability Sort of concept, which means that if a fire is in your land, you are automatically responsible for it. So it softens, it doesn't mean we'll be entirely but it softens it. So it's kind of a rollback of trying to get, you know, people to be more responsible for taking care of their land. So that could be that is not a very good sign. But they're also good things. Like for example, like I said, the hydrological unit thing is being strengthened. So this is another statement that was in the constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, the land waters and natural resources within the state, under the power of the state should be used to the greatest benefit of the people. So just to point this out, the state should be responsible for the well being of the people. So I think that's really important to think about when states, you know, they're, of course they're interested in development. They want to make sure that they develop you know, GDP and stuff. But states must also remember that the people are with other people they are they are nowhere, right. So this is comes back to the idea of human rights. And Larry has touched on this, so I won't anymore. But just sort of the trans boundary perspective, which is my last slide. Is that basically, like Shireen has mentioned, the politics of it all the simplicity, when people don't look at the complexity behind it, it makes it also difficult for countries to react properly. And also like, if everybody is just saying, oh, palm oil is bad, for example, it makes it very difficult for Indonesia and Malaysia to take responsibility. Because they might say like, oh, if I say, yes, there has been some fires, then it's going to be bad for my country, you know. So it makes it difficult for countries to also make statements and make decisions. Because people just understand things in black and white. And so countries really have to think about, you know, what, what happened to my industry, what, what happened to, you know, things like this when they when they make decisions. So I think it's very important to look at the bigger picture and try to get deeper in and not just things in black and white. So for example, this is a quote just very recently, you know, when talking about the link of, from tires to palm oil, of course, tires don't occur. I mean, palm oil plantations don't generally use fire nowadays. But like I said, you know, they are indirect ways. But these ways are not talked about,

because they are so scared Indonesia, Malaysia, you're so scared that you will make it worse for the oil industry. So things are just being kind to be de politicized so much that it becomes really bad to even move forward. Yeah, I wanted to talk a bit about the transport, reduce pollution that was already touched on if I'm not mistaken, but this is an example of criminalizing hate, because it literally creates a law to say that if you create a case in Singapore, we can go after you using the law. So this is an example of it. It hasn't been able to be used effectively. But this is just an example of a country trying to really criminalize a violation of human rights. Yeah. So that's all I have. Thank you very much.

Siew Lyn Wong 2:27:16

Thank you very much, Helena. That was that was brilliant. And you've you've also touched on all the different points that we've tried to raise in our previous sessions, as well as our previous presentations. I just want to mention, just a couple of points. You talked about the science of it. And that's absolutely critical. So can't emphasize that enough that you want to cover something like the haze? Please do try and look at the science, talk to people who know what they're talking about, understand the science a bit and actually make some reporting richer, and absolutely get more accurate, right. You also talked about marginalized people, which is, again, something that perhaps might need a little bit more attention on always talking about countries fighting against each other, you know, ASEAN Regional Forum, which are also important, but let's not forget those who are marginalized people living right on the edge of a plantation on peat land, who have no water. Is that being reported enough? Why is it important to be reported on here? And obviously, the COVID impact? Basically, if something like the only Omnibus law is a direct consequence of COVID, and I've often tried to deal with the economic fallout of this, this terrible, terrible, ongoing pandemic? So all these different things, I think should look out for and it's not just for Indonesians to report on things like the omnibus law because it affects other countries as well. So So, you know, those those were some of the points that that struck me. I have a question for you, Helena. And this also related to somebody assuming that said, my government figures, the rules under reporting, I mean, 100,000 deaths, and you say, okay, like, 10 people died. I mean, that's almost a fast right. This kind of underreporting, I think it's like, you know, we've got to save our own essence kind of thing we have to look after ourselves, you know, it's really mentioned, conversely, that when the government tries to put out figures about, okay, this is this is actually what's happening on Palm palm oil plantations in Indonesia. People don't believe them. So so this this whole thing about people not believing anything that government says, I mean, how can we overcome that? How can we do what should we do to overcome this distress as soon as the mobile government figures?

Dr. Helena Varkkey 2:29:31

Yeah, that's, that's a really big issue, I think, in the whole sort of palm oil conversation. So you know, it's sort of a chicken and egg situation. We don't, we can't really trace back where it all started. But I think one of the important things that we can look back on is that a lot of the governments that are the Indonesia or Malaysia even tend to react very defensively when it comes To these accusations, you know, and not only just like as a group like Indonesia and Malaysia against the world, but even Indonesia, defensively against Malaysia, like what your example that you have shown, you know, so when this happens, it becomes very hard to even be trustworthy. Even when you do put out proper figures, well researched figures, people will always not take it very seriously. Because the first thing that you had said, was that No, none of my companies have but for example, like what Melissa said, and then when they do come in and look, give you some figures, they're like, but you just said that day that you are entirely not at fault. So how come suddenly now you're trying to justify and stuff like that. And I think this is what is facing, like, what Indonesia and Malaysia is facing against the EU right now. So

when you use trying to have certain restrictions on Palm oil for, for biofuels, and then Malaysia, and Indonesia is trying to say no, but look, our calculations show that we are doing alright, you know, and you should give us a chance. But the US just saying, We don't believe you. So that's, and you know, that's again, comes down to the science, even though you are studying the same thing, as you would know, with climate change science, the answers can also be very different. And even within Malaysian scientists, you would see different differing views as well. Sometimes these would say, we can manage peace, some scientists would say no way you should not even touch. So the science is also out. The government is not is not being it's not being very cooperative. The answer first is always just know, you did this? No, we did. And then Oh, actually, like, so it lends a, it makes things like the mspo is still not as strong as it could have been. And even rspo. Just because of association, it started in Malaysia, you know, even using maybe a rescue is not even strong enough now, and you're looking at their own mechanisms. So I think it's a problem of our do, we and we really have to work on our PR actually. And, and to the key, like what student has pointed out is to make the world understand that not all commodities the same, and that is sustainable palm oil out there. And, and we are working very hard to go towards that. And palm oil should not be just looked at as a broad brush, you should be supporting sustainable palm oil. So that there's an initiative and there is a economic incentive for more companies to go into sustainable focus at the moment is not profitable. Companies are just doing it because if not, they will be vilified in the media. But it's not profitable to do so. So unless it becomes profitable unnecessarily while there's enough demand, you won't be worth the companies now we'll just be whatever, there won't be new companies kicking up because they were the ones who are already there, the ones who can afford it, the ones who are not there are looking at the market. If it's worth it, I will become sustainable. If it's not, I'm not gonna waste my money. So that is the problem. Now you have to communicate, the media has to communicate that sustainable palm oil is a thing. And it's a thing to be supported.

Siew Lyn Wong 2:33:29

Sure, great. Great. That's really good. I'm going to go on to another question, which I'd like to address to everybody Actually, this this, this is about the notion of crime, right that you had raised. When I first heard about this, this approach of yours, I thought this is very fascinating, because it's something that I think media don't really cover. Because it's complex, it appears to be a very big topic to understand. So So my question to you and to the others as well. So first, you are Helena saying that there's a crime implies that there's a criminal, okay. Now, I think for myself on the part of media, it's very easy to say that's the bad guy. We are the good guys, or you know that palm oil within Malaysia are the bad guys and they should be punished so that the palm oil companies operating in Malaysia are the bad guys. So so so you know, so they're the criminals and they should be punished right? Now, how does that affect trans boundary his narratives in the media? Does it reduce the sense of responsibility when you say something like that? Is it a crime? Okay, so that's, that's what you have learned? So I've just got a question out to all three of you. For certain, how would you respond to that? Okay, to that same question, but also in context of another question is coming. How does good governance effectively curb deforestation? So again, weak governance means there's bad governance. This bad governance means this minerals involved here. So just hold it fine. I'll come to you and finally to Larry, how would ASEAN tick to considering transport we have a hate crime against humanity being you might know the answer to that. But anyway, so so Helen have a speech. Thank you.

Dr. Helena Varkkey 2:35:15

Okay. Yeah, that's a very sort of broad question. Maybe I can contextualize it. In terms of, well, what I what I work on, which, which is patronage, which I didn't talk about directly, but maybe I can just link it

here a bit. So thinking about who's actually at fault. So for example, back in the day, when I was doing my research, when there was actually still a lot of fires happening on plantations. patronage was something very important because what we found was that, number one, you know, palm oil should not really be on peatlands in the first place, because it is protected lands most of the time. So the very fact that plantations are even established on peatlands, that itself is a crime enemies against environmental law or other against the regulations. So you will see them this is the start of the order, the evidence of the patronage culture. How, how is it possible that any part of these plantations could end up on peatlands? That's because now there's a lot of collusion going on and getting licenses and subverting EIA's and stuff like that. There's a lot of collusion between the government and the plantations as well. And everybody knows that this is something common in Southeast Asia, right? There's a lot of this very close relations between governments and big companies, powerful companies. So that itself, when you already established yourself in the first place, in a circumstance that is beneficial to you, it becomes very easy for you to get away with a lot of things. So in the past, even though there were fires in plantations, they were using fire, hardly anyone got caught for it, right? I, in my in my field work, I've heard stories, like for example, what do you call this, the policeman will come and investigate the fires, but they will purposely investigate during Friday prayers, so nobody's around. So they'll be like, Oh, yeah, we went, but nothing, you know, that kind of stuff. So it's a collusion thing that's happening. And even if something goes to court, you'll get thrown out and stuff like that. So who is who's the criminal here? Is it the court? I mean, is it the company? Or is it the government, that's why I say the governance is actually on the root of this. And, and, and connecting to that, this idea of criminality as well, like, that's why I say you have to look at it in a landscape approach. You know, companies, they are there, they should be responsible for their villagers who are around them for the whole area. But then, you know, they just say that, oh, it's not in my land, it's not my fault. So, of course, we cannot say that it's their fault. But then, you know, this is why it's very important for things like rsop, which encourages community relationships, community arrangements, very sort of help each other and all that. So I think this is also part of the socialization that happens with sustainable palm oil practices. So I think it's not always very clear the exact person who is the criminal. And this is the problem that Singapore faced, when they tried to implement the Singapore transponder, the law. So it's very hard to pinpoint number one, which, which company was the one who was causing the exact piece? Or the exact Pm 2.5? That rich Singapore, number one, and it's hard to also try to pinpoint the person responsible? Is it the company? Is it the CEO? Is it the manager? So it's a whole complicated thing? And I think they haven't actually sorted it out yet. It's something very new, so you can't really blame them. No other country has something like this. But it's a it's a it's a new area in law that I think needs to be developed as well.

Siew Lyn Wong 2:38:50

Thank you very much. There's something that journalists could perhaps try and try and look into and just to explain from the legal point of view, sorry, your your, your, your comments, please. In terms of governance, deforestation, and crime.

Surin Suksuwan 2:39:06

Many things to unpack there. Not too sure out that that's it, but maybe just talking about crime first. You know, yeah, it's a good point raise, right that if you you say is a crime, then there has to be criminals out there. And then you go after the criminals, but that's that's kind of like saying, okay, there's one terrorists terrorists out there, then you're going to go after terrorists, right. So you use the US response, they go flying with their drones and missiles inside attacking another country. So you can use that kind of approach with the Hayes problem in in ASEAN, right, let's can can just simply blame a particular

group of people right. There, there's no single criminal this And different people may or may share a certain part of the plane, and it could be part of the supply chain. Right. So imagining more like a supply chain different parties are, are guilty at different stages. So there's no single criminal involved here, you and I also guilty to a certain extent, if you are buying products that are part of the supply chain that causes deforestation, you know, clearing of PII and fire. Right. And that's why the response to that should be that let's support sustainable products. Because if you buy rspo certified products, then you have a certain kind of confidence that that it did not come from a place where there was fire being used, and which has led to, to the haze. Right. So and yeah, so in that sense, you know, companies that does not have a sustainable farmer policy should be blamed company, and these include the downstream companies that are buying the permit. And the companies themselves who are planting the pump have been and may have cleared the area. But but then it's, it's not an easy situation. I mean, you have small holders and small holders that 1000s of them, can they be expected to be able to produce sustainable palm because as Selena said, you don't actually get much from planting palm or less, you know, that certifies sustainable the cost of the certification may be more than whatever premiums that you can get. And then going back to my earlier argument as well. It's not just about you know, what about the other crops? What are the certification systems available? For those other costs? Are people actually demanding that those are the crops are produced sustainably, as well. So I think this is where the battlefield should be where, as consumers do demand that all these things are produced sustainably, not just by mom, but also maize, also sugar cane, livestock, you know, and so on. So hopefully, when people are demanding these things, then then the steps should be taken to address this issue.

Siew Lyn Wong 2:42:39

Okay, thank you very much for that. Let's look at the supply chain. Let's look at individuals like you and I, let's let's let's let's be very comprehensive about you know, where to lay the blame, if there is blame to be made danger, talking of laying the blame. Larry, ASEAN, how do you think ASEAN will take on China? I'm pretty sure this has been might might have been forwarded to them like crime against his transboundary pollution or transport release a crime against humanity? How do you know what what say ASEAN?

Larry Maramis 2:43:13

Well, ASEAN is not still he says work in progress. And that I think, if there were, if there was a body in us, and that would be able to, to, to provide some guidance, it would be the US and ministerial meeting on transnational crime. Now, it so happens that the that the action action plan on presidential crime, crime, also references environmental crime, but it's not codify. Right? So there's no real as I think Halen already pointed out, there's no real definition of that. So there's been more emphasis on types of crime like human trafficking, drug narcotics. And of course, the the the entry point in my mind, if you want to if it has to be through the entry point of transnational crime, you would have to be illegal logging. Wildlife, we call it a trading. So through the site is right Convention on International Trade on endangered species. So to me, that would be the proper way, but like many things in our cell is it's very driven by the the, the enforcement agencies in this case, right. So it's the the ministry, the home ministries, it's the those who are looking at the the enforcement, not so much the the prosecution of it has left to their vital ministries. And I think one of the things that we've we should note of course, in Indonesia, you've we've combined those who provide licensed borrowers With those who are actually regulating the environment, so the the ministry is, you know, has this kind of dual personality. But you know, these are just a specific case study that we need to be studying a little more at what is what has been the impact of this. But the point is really, I think, to answer your question, I think criminality and the criminalization of environmental crimes has to it has still a long way, has yet to be codified, standardized, in terms of

definition. If there is, however, at least a platform through the action plan, the action plan may vary, makes very clear references to environmental crime. And it also lays out a number of properly our priorities like information exchange, legal matters, law enforcement, training, and also institutional capacity building through this, this the Center for the Center for combating transnational crime, perhaps that could be expanded its its mandate could be expanded in this particular area of, of environmental crime, but of course, resumes, that there are other other activities, and here the environment ministries have to take, take the lead in defining what our environmental crimes, think that's how it would work. I mean, very bureaucratic. But that's, that's, you know, that's how we would actually be initiated. And it's possible, I think it's definitely possible.

Siew Lyn Wong 2:46:35

Oh, that's, that's, that's really, really good to hear. Yeah. Well, we've got, we've got three minutes. And that leaves each of you one minute to give the journalists a take away. How would you, okay, just a final message from each of you, in one minute to the journalists. We start with you Larry. One. So you need to unmute. mute your microphone, please.

Larry Maramis 2:47:08

Yeah, I think if there was something that I would be really zeroing on in on, on on the ASEAN in transboundary haze, how it addresses transboundary haze? It's really in the area of you know, of essential government governance. Right. I think that's already been mentioned, there's been a lot of progress in overarching institutional frameworks in strategic planning, etc. There's not so much been attention being drawn up on, on sanctioning, and I briefly touched on this before, you know, on enforcement, on issues of, you know, what is the consequence of fun of these crimes? So I think it's good that we ended up on crime, because that, indeed, is should be the trigger point for what what happens next, in terms of, you know, the the net result. But behind that there are these issues that I think also need to be undertaken, I think the journalists would really look into what has been the national and regional experience in addressing this in terms of, you know, goals, time inputs, capturing the knowledge, you know, and moving away from this captive institutional culture. I think that would be the area that I would explore further. Thanks.

Siew Lyn Wong 2:48:42

Thank you very much. That's great. And moving on to Surin. Next, please.

Surin Suksuwan 2:48:47

Yeah, thanks. So I think, to me, the this issue of trans boundary as deforestation, fires, and so on, there are many dimensions to and and it's a very rich source of, of, you know, stories that the media can can pick up on. So it doesn't always have to be on a macro level. It can be very human, it can be very, at a very personal level, you can focus on particular communities or societies that are impacted, you could focus on certain minority groups that are affected, as suggested by Helena. You can, yeah, there's so many angles that you can focus on. I think that I think that we need to hear those kind of stories and try to avoid the kind of very common or even cliched narratives that we get to hear about his you know, it seems like whenever we hear stories about this kind of, you know, narratives are repeated, you know, whether it's the orangutans that are displaced or you know, the or bomb companies that are to be built. And so and I think we need to move away from this very kind of narrow viewpoint and and actually expand the scope. And you know, let people understand the broader perspective later related to the issue.

Siew Lyn Wong 2:50:16

Excellent. Thank you. Thank you so much, sir. And finally, Helena.

Dr. Helena Varkkey 2:50:21

Okay, just going back to what Surin also mentioned, I think I also want to remind everyone about the Mekong part of the problem as well. And so I am guilty of that. So I started out looking at the sudden problem, and I haven't moved on too much from there. But you know, haze in ASEAN is not a single problem. There are sub problems to it. And the story of the drivers in the North is different than the story of the drivers south. For some reason, the South get stopped about more. And I think that has led to things like for example, ASEAN, having code programs for peatlands, but not programs for the types of agricultural land that exists in my home that is on fire, right. But the picture that I showed about the mountain demon fire, so it has indirectly or unnoticeably, sort of ASEAN has focus media has focused academics are focused on the south. And this is hidden problem that is happening in the background that I think warrants so much more up, not not only local attention, it has to be regional, it has to be global as well. So I think that story needs to be told.

Siew Lyn Wong 2:51:42

And that's, that's really a really, really pertinent reminder. And I think there's there's lots of opportunities here for collaboration. So as ASEAN is trying to get together, at the governmental level, perhaps media across a central also start looking together, share stories, share solutions, and there might be very, very interesting products out of that. And there's funding available. There is one last minute question that's come in, Danny, may I get your permission to just get get the folks to answer this? Yeah, let's

Danny Yong 2:52:16

Just let's just go with it.

Siew Lyn Wong 2:52:17

Thank you very much, Danny. Yeah. Okay, so a question from Indonesia. So let's see how, how can we demand better responsibility from ASEAN, in addressing deforestation and trans boundaries?

Larry Maramis 2:52:37

I think we're alluding to this in in Hannah's segments, where we're really talking about, you know, how much harm how much is affecting the the citizen, the regular, you know, the people who are whose livelihoods are affected by my dad. So, to me, the emphasis on getting better, more voices, ensuring that, you know, you have a level playing playing field, you know, these negotiations that are taking place are always, you know, state level or government level, and, and increasingly, private sector. Yeah, so company, a private sector and government levels of business, government kind of thing. But it's really not an emphasis on on the community. We all talk about social forestry. And there's been a lot of advances in social forestry was one of the things that the biggest advances, how technology has allowed local communities to also have their voices. I think that the the way to have better response, if that's what we the aim of that question, better responsibility is to get a better informed citizenry, and those who are affected the most, I think that's really what needs to be focused on.

Siew Lyn Wong 2:54:03

Thanks. Thanks very much great ancillary. I can't I can't stop any of the sort of points that have been made. And so the three asks from the three panelists are lots and lots of lots to unpack from from these last few hours. It's going to be available, I believe. So on Facebook, the recordings going to be

available. So please go back, share with your colleagues collaborate. I think, as I said, again, I'll just repeat that there's funding available and Danny's probably going to repeat that again. I hope that you guys think of that media things have interesting ideas, researchers who have joined us today also think of interesting ideas to bring forward the conversation to bring forward solutions to this very, very complex problem called transponding beads. Thank you very much. Over to you then.

Danny Yong 2:54:54

Yeah, thank you so much. To Siew Lyn, Surin, Helena and Larry So to our colleagues and students, right, there is a there are grants available. I think we already in conversation most of your newsrooms, about working on the grants, do come back to us if you haven't on the kind of story, you know, right. on that story project. Of course, I think there's plenty of content today already, that if you wish to write something on, you can and like to, I like to tell you guys that you can still raise questions to the experts on the panel here. It is directed to us, I have added a we have added the team is able to edit the different various journalists who are in the in the group into a journalists whatsapp group. So to those of you who want to, you know, it'd be great. Yeah, that's, that's a, that's a great thing that we can get from this project. So that you guys have a chance to network, Julie mentioned that the recording is available. And one two days, we will put it, we put the recording up in the in that group, and we will send it out to you guys, those of you who are not in the group, if you want it. Pretty soon, the recording for masterclass one and two will also be uploaded to the seafore website. And the transcript will also be done as well. So let me enter here quickly, there is quite a quite a long session. So thank you, everybody, for for attending. There's another one coming up two weeks from now. So, you know, look out for your WhatsApp or your email, we will remind you, and so till then have a good weekend, everybody.

Ajinder Kaur 2:56:42

Sorry, Danny, we have a post poll to just complete on sorry.

Danny Yong 2:56:47

Thank you for reminding me. So I think that's what that's a poll. So Ajinder. How do they access the poll?

Ajinder Kaur 2:57:00

That's been shared in the chat.

Danny Yong 2:57:07

Please go to the chat. There's a survey at the end for you guys to fill up. Please do. Please do help us. Please cooperate and fill up those for us, please. This is your typical one of those things that funders one, you know that you guys have appreciated the thing you've learned something and scalping. So please take three minutes to fill up the form. Is that right?

Muhammad Adib Faiz 2:57:35

That's doing fine. As Danny was saying, thank you very much for coming. And we greatly appreciate your attendance here. If you could please fill out the post masterclass survey form, there'll be a great help to us, for the founders, and also for I think our speakers as well, because I think they really want to know, kind of gauge the impact that this is all had on the audience and and how much they have learned. I know I've and it's for future reference, it will be and we have some people filling it out now. So as Danny was saying, the speakers are available, you will be getting to more contact with them later,

especially once you start commencing your story projects. So feel free to really reminisce, think and ruminate on some of the content, you can go back and watch the video. In the meantime, before we share the video with you. Personally, you can actually view the recording on Facebook Live McKinney Academy's Facebook Live. But just have a moment to think about it. and contemplate whatever questions you have a note for the speakers, more questions started to come in just the very tail end of of the of the whole whole session. So I think people were taking time to digest a lot of this information because much of its new and as many of the issues that you raise, I think things that most of us have never heard of before. I think that most most of the content can say that. So we'll just take a Danny I think we'll we'll leave the call on just for a short while, just like for the remaining five minutes for people to fill in. And if our speakers had any comments or things last minute things they wanted to share about about the masterclass or about what how they hope to interact with the participants. If not, that's fine. And anyway, once once you've completed the form, then feel free to say goodbye in the chat and we'll see you in the next class.

Dr. Helena Varkkey 2:59:48

I guess what we discussed before is that it might be more convenient. If those who want to consult with us can we can do it as a group. So either so we can just set a time With the forumers so yeah once once the once the generalist get organized, we can go to that step and try to figure out a time that would be good for us to be able to take your questions and give some comments or feedback on the on the pieces that you're developing.

Danny Yong 3:00:18

okay