FORUM II SEADPRI 2010: CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND SPATIAL PLANNING: ASSESSMENT AND COMMUNICATION OF VULNERABILITY

Puri Pujangga, UKM Bangi
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The Climatic Hazards Programme of the Southeast Asia Disaster Prevention Research Institute (SEADPRI-UKM) conducts research and strengthens capacity to support the national agenda on adaptation to extreme weather and climate change. The focus is on disaster prevention including risk reduction and management, post disaster recovery and reconstruction. Aspects taken into account are science and technology for disaster risk reduction, socio-economic impacts and vulnerability assessments, education and awareness as well as governance for human security and sustainability. The Programme implements its outreach activities in conjunction various stakeholders at national and international levels.

SEADPRI-UKM welcomed the new decade by convening the Forum on Climate Change Adaptation and Spatial Planning: Assessment and Communication of Vulnerability. Held on 5th January 2010 at Puri Pujangga, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, the Forum was co-organised with the Minerals and Geoscience Department of Malaysia (JMG), Geological Society of Malaysia (GSM), Geological Survey of Finland (GTK) and the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS). Dr. Philipp Schmidt-Thome, Senior Scientist of Geological Survey of Finland (GTK) and International Fellow of SEADPRI-UKM was the principal speaker while Mr. Chen Shick Pei, Honorary Fellow, served as moderator. About 60 participants from federal and state government agencies, local authorities, universities, non-government organisations and the private sector attended the Forum. It commenced with a warm welcome from Prof. Dr. Joy Jacqueline Pereira, Deputy Director of SEADPRI-UKM and ended with presentations of tokens of appreciation by Tuan Haji Zakaria Mohamad, Director of Minerals and Geoscience Selangor Department, to the speaker and moderator.

Dr. Schmidt-Thome focused on explaining uncertainties associated with climate change projections based on evidence-based observations, as well as its implications on climate change adaptation and mitigation responses. The uncertainties as to how the climate will develop over the 21st Century should be communicated to policy and decision makers so that appropriate interventions can be implemented. It was stressed that even without climate change, there is constantly evolving vulnerability, making adaptation to extreme climate events a current necessity. If vulnerability to extreme events is understood, additional measures on climate change adaptation can be taken into consideration, so that they are more effective in preventing disasters. Understanding underlying vulnerability processes of natural hazards supports the sustainability of adaptation strategies. Scientific support in decision making processes demands the proper shaping of communication processes and building of trust and confidence. Since decision making is a very different task in comparison to scientific research work, a common understanding of demands and potentials among the scientists and decision makers is vital. Vulnerability assessments as well as climate change scenarios should function as an integral part of spatial planning – and thus provide more effective results for adapting to a changing climate change.

A lively discussion ensued upon the presentation of this emerging approach in Europe, which is yet to be taken in Southeast Asia and many parts of the world. Many issues were raised ranging from the means of communication of risks to various stakeholders and strengthening of spatial planning systems, the need for innovative partnerships at the local level and effective management of federal state relations, to the December 2009 United Nations climate change negotiations in Copenhagen and its implications to Malaysia and Southeast Asia. There was general consensus that everyone had a role to play in climate change adaptation, from the individual right up to the government agencies at all levels as well as corporate and civil organisations. This information has to disseminated to all relevant stakeholders in an effective and appropriate manner, taking into account the local cultural context.

SEADPRI-UKM believes that successful adaptation to climate change requires integration across scales and effective communication among different stakeholders, especially between scientists and policy-makers. The Forum **promotes** this effort by building the capacity of local researchers and practitioners involved in climate change and spatial planning. SEADPRI-UKM is currently involved in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on *"Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation (SREX)"*, which is due in 2011. Interested parties are requested to contact Prof. Dr. Joy Jacqueline Pereira at SEADPRI-UKM for further information.

Caption for Photo 1:

Dr. Philipp Schmidt-Thome, International Fellow of SEADPRI-UKM and Mr. Chen Shick Pei, Honorary Fellow emphasized the need for innovative partnerships to address climate change adaptation during the discussion.

Caption for Photo 2:

The audience at the Forum was given an overview of the emerging approach in Europe, which is yet to be taken in Southeast Asia and many parts of the world.