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Andreas Lako  
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# mengasihi tanah air



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**MENGASIHI TANAH AIR**

**EDITOR:**

**Andreas Lako**  
**Wijanto Hadipuro**

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# **MENGASIHI TANAH AIR**

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**RIWAYAT HIDUP SINGKAT PENULIS**

# Climate Talks and Carbon Solidarity<sup>18</sup>

Budi Widianarko

THE subheading of Sunday's The Jakarta Post editorial (Nov. 28, 2010) was "Is there hope on the horizon?", which perfectly reflects the current state of global climate change discourse.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) on climate change has occurred 16 consecutive times. Never in history have countries from all over the world — large and small, developed and less developed — been so unified in recognizing the threat posed by climate change as a common challenge during the latest COP in Cancun, Mexico. But, the world was still unable to make an agreement on truly global climate action.

The current global approach to climate action is still to some extent trapped in "reductionism", meaning the earth's carbon-cycling capacity is treated like a tradable commodity on the global market. This clearly shows there is a problem with global leadership.

To deal with the climate challenge, the world needs a new kind of leadership, one that is capable of eliminating a wide array of frictions, like those between rich, emerging, and poor nations that have different carbon agendas; between national growth aspirations and individual rights; and between those with hedonistic and those with modest lifestyles.

At the global and local levels climate change is not a uniform process, especially in terms of causes and impacts. Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by country, sector or individual varies. Likewise, different

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<sup>18</sup> The Jakarta Post 29 Desember 2010.

**countries or segments of the population in a country experience different impacts from climate change depending on their geographical position and specific traits.**

**One way to measure an individual, organization or nation's contribution to climate change is by calculating its carbon footprint. As the commonly accepted basic definition, the carbon footprint is a certain amount of gaseous emissions that are associated with human production and consumption and are related to climate change.**

**Recently, Hertwich and Peters in Environmental Science and Technology (volume 43, 2009) presented a new way of calculating carbon footprints in terms of tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per person based on a single, trade-linked model of the global economy. Based on their calculations, we can see there is great variation in per capita GHGs footprints between countries in the world.**

**The per capita carbon footprint of East and Southeast Asian countries reveals huge gaps. Each person in Hong Kong releases 14 times more carbon than someone in Indonesia or the Philippines, while Japan, Taiwan and South Korea have about half the per capita carbon footprint than Hong Kong.**

**More strikingly, looking closer at contributing sectors, the population of Hong Kong spends 28 percent of their carbon footprint just on clothes.**

**Less developed countries in Southeast Asia like Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines consume more carbon for food, almost twice those of their more developed counterparts in East Asia like Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.**

**On the contrary, more developed East Asian countries spend two to five times more of their carbon footprint on manufactured products than the less developed counterparts in Southeast Asia.**

**The slow progress of concerted action to deal with climate change clearly shows how socio-economic and political barriers work to hamper problem resolution. Referring to the A-K-T-E-S-P scheme for a better**



environment outlined by Stephen Trudgill two decades ago: economic (E), social (S) and political (P) barriers cannot be left out, although agreement (A), knowledge (K) and technology (T) have been overcome.

The challenges posed by climate change are significant and demand strong commitment from leadership at all levels of government and society. In addition, since the interconnectedness of environmental, economic, political, social and spiritual challenges is becoming increasingly obvious, Mary Louise Flemming and her colleagues stress the importance of a “shared vision of basic values to provide an ethical foundation for the emerging world community”.

The fight against climate change is certainly more of a problem of ethics than merely a technical obstacle. What is needed is a strong public stance by leaders. There are, of course, enormous political constraints at the national and global levels to avoid doing what is best for the planet and to leave a good legacy for the next generation.

While the discourse on climate change has occupied so much space in the local and global arena, solidarity is somewhat neglected. Countries still fail to bring a concept of solidarity to the meeting room.

The deficiency of all global summits on climate change has clearly demonstrated how countries are still absorbed by their own interests rather than seeking a mutual win-win solution.

Climate change, as the most pressing global sustainability challenge, requires a collaborative, global response. Leadership and acceptance of differentiated responsibilities must be at the heart of any future global agreement to reduce the carbon footprint.

Lord Nicholas Stern and Ian Noble endorsed three basic criteria of global action to combat climate change, effectiveness, efficiency and equity. Equity has to become the core of all decision making and the starting point for action. Wealthy countries are responsible for the bulk of past emissions.

As the late Pope John Paul II put it “The challenge ... is to ensure a globalization in solidarity, a globalization without marginalization”. Climate change has confronted the global community with the challenge of building an equitable society. To achieve this, the global community has a duty to ensure solidarity. Further, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the vast spectrum of solidarity. Ecological crises in our time call for “a solidarity which embraces time and space”.

To achieve sustainability on this earth, a fairer sense of intergenerational solidarity has to be supplemented with a renewed sense of intragenerational solidarity, especially in the relationship between developing countries and highly industrialized countries, or between low and high carbon consuming individuals and countries. Only when the spirit of solidarity prevails will the biggest challenge to human civilization be overcome. ©

