

BKSAP Chair Fadli Zon Criticizes European Parliament on Discrimination and Smear Campaign against CPO

Chairperson of the House Committee for Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation, Fadli Zon, joined and participated as a speaker in a dialogue between the European Parliament and ASEAN Inter-parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) virtually held from Brussels, Belgium, on Tuesday, 22 June 2021. He became a speaker at the first Panel Session together with Bernd Lange, Chair of Committee on International Trade of the European Parliament.

Ahead of the 44th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the European Union (EU) and ASEAN, Mr Zon urged the European Parliament to promote dialogue, especially on issues that potentially hinder trade such as crude palm oil (CPO) issue.

He went on to say that palm oil has been subject to unfair trade practices compared to other kinds of vegetable oil. Palm oil is classified by the European Union authority as High Risk ILUC (Indirect Land Used Change). However, it has higher productivity level than other kinds of vegetable oil that take up more land compared to palm plantations. The EU and European Parliament should not discriminate against palm oil from Indonesia, he said. Discrimination against agricultural products would not help out developing countries but rather worsen the the lives of local farmers who rely on the commodity.

During the debate, Mr Zon underlined the importance of future trade between EU and ASEAN, particularly one that is initiated through bilateral approach, reiterating the possibility of resuming regional trade negotiation between EU and ASEAN, which has been postponed to make way for open bilateral negotiation.

The promoted status of diplomatic relations between the two entities, from dialogue to strategic partners, were also expected to open up opportunity for cooperation in new areas such as the development of regional health resilience, or the development of renewable energy. He pointed out that the two areas could reinforce the economic recovery after the pandemic, particularly through investment and new job creation.

He said he was optimistic that the trade relations between EU and ASEAN would continue to grow, given that both were strategic partners with many similarities, particularly in the commitment to maintaining multilateralism and international order. That also applies to regional trade negotiations that would resume only after bilateral negotiations could be agreed upon.