



AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
BRUSSELS

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Brussels, 22 May 2012

Excellency,

I am very pleased to inform you that the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in cooperation with the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia will be organizing the first Indonesian Interfaith Scholarship in August 2012 that will be dedicated to 15 awardees from the European Union (term of reference is attached).

As a country with a pluralistic society and proud of its rich cultural and religious diversity, Indonesia continues to promote inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue to create tolerance, mutual understanding and respect among religious community. I sincerely believe that this program is in line with the Union's objectives and values, among others are to promote peace, equality, dignity and human rights.

In this connection, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Bahrul Hayat, Ph.D and I, would like to officially convey this initiative to you on 29 May 2012. I would highly appreciate it if other colleagues and staffers from the relevant entities within the European Parliament can be present during that date.

I have asked the Political Counsellor of the Indonesian Mission to remain in touch with your office. As the program approaches, please do not hesitate to contact him at (02) 775 01 20 ext. 149/ 0488 88 95 44 or rsachu@yahoo.com.

I sincerely hope that you would consider my request and inform me of your available time at your earliest convenience.

Please accept, Honourable, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration

Sincerely yours,

Arif Havas Oegroseno

Hon. Dr. Werner Langen, MEP
Chairman of the ASEAN Delegation
European Parliament

TERMS OF REFERENCE

THE INDONESIAN INTERFAITH SCHOLARSHIP 2012

I. Introduction

Indonesia is an archipelagic country, stretches over more than 6.000 inhabited islands (the whole number of islands is more than 17.000) from the North-West corner of Sumatra to the Western border of Papua New Guinea over about 5.500 km and from the Indian Ocean in the South to the Philippines in the North over about 1.500 km. With a population of over 240 million people, Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous country. Indonesia is culturally and religiously probably the most plural country of the world. There are 741 different languages spoken, there are significant racial differences and although the great majority of Indonesians belong to Islam (more than 85%), about 10% are Christians (2/3 Protestants, 1/3 Catholics), and 1.5% are Hindus (the original inhabitants of the island of Bali), Buddhists, Confucians, adherents of indigenous religions and others.

During the 4th until 13th century, the archipelago received significant influence from the Eastern civilization, and subsequently from 14th century onward, from Islamic civilization and Western civilization since the colonial period began. Those three great civilizations of the world blended in nicely within our various societies, paving way for the culture of co-existence in the country.

From the very beginning, Indonesia's founding fathers realized that most important challenge they faced was national unity; How to unite this rich variety of different ethnicities, races, languages, cultures, and religious orientation.

But the most significant decision was taken when they approved a constitution for the free Republic of Indonesia in 1945. In its preamble, they stated that Indonesia was build upon five pillars, named *Pancasila*, whose first one was the belief in God. This was not done in order to oppose atheism, but in order to state that Indonesians of all religious affiliations were citizens of Indonesia in the full sense of the word, thus that there would be no discrimination on religious grounds in Indonesia. For a country with an overwhelming Muslim majority this was a generous and far-looking decision.

When our founding fathers laid down the foundations of our country, the value and tradition of "*Musyawaharah untuk Mufakat*" or "consultations towards consensus" was already firmly rooted in Indonesian consciousness. This tradition evolved as our people's response to the reality of being a pluralistic society. It does not allow the brazen domination by the majority, since it requires that the voice of the minority must be heard. Before a proper consensus is reached, all views must be expressed and all interests, including those of minorities, must be taken into account. The culture of dialogue is

fundamentally significant and highly valued in the Indonesian society.

The 1997 financial crisis that critically hit some of Asian countries including Indonesia has brought a transitional governmental system in Indonesia. The country has then become a democratic country which consequently has transformed the people into an open society.

Moreover, it also has changed the previous strictly centralized system of government to a decentralized one, and the most important progress is from a military dominated authoritarianism to a system of civilian supremacy.

Indonesians also experience first-hand the advanced development of information and communication technology which enable them to interact with world actors and easily follow crucial policies conducted by countries all over the world. At the same time, they become involve in every aspects of life, put forward their opinions as well as influence public opinions by conducting actions, stirring arguments and initiating public debates.

The 9/11 tragedy in 2001 has created negative stereotyping of Islam in the West as well as misperception and misinterpretation of relating Islam and terrorism. Indonesia, as a Muslim majority country, condemns the acts of terrorism and is against the notion of relating Islam and terrorism. Islam is a religion of peace, and instead, Indonesian government believes that any forms of violence should not be related to particular religious teachings.

In 2004, Indonesians experienced the first fully democratic general, presidential, and regional elections (a process that includes: 147 million voters, 24 political parties, 2025 electoral districts, 448,705 candidates, 15,276 national, provincial and local legislators to be elected, 600,000 polling booths, 3,5 million administrative personnel) were conducted peacefully in 2004. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was elected President, winning the support of more than 76 million voters, the largest such support in the history of mankind. In 2009, the successful events were repeated.

From that moment, Indonesia transforms itself into a democratic society, where the Indonesian people have a direct influence on policy, and the government must practice a transparent and public oriented style of diplomacy. Indonesia is then recognized by the international community as the world's third largest democracy, after India and the United States. Indonesia welcomes the fact that, as the nation with the world's largest Muslim population, it is a living proofs that Islam, modernity, and democracy can and do go hand-in-hand.

II. Indonesia and the Effort to Promote Harmony amongst Civilizations

Based on the historical values and the positive developments in Indonesia, the government of Indonesia has brought interfaith dialogue at all levels within the internal and external borders and become one of the main features of Indonesia's foreign policy.

Internally, interfaith dialogue among religious leaders and religious-based civil society groups in Indonesia has been conducted domestically and promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs since 1970's. The Ministry continues to promote the dialogue domestically. Today, more than 400 forums of Inter-religious Harmony have established throughout Indonesia.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has conducted Interfaith Dialogues since 2004 and has brought this agenda internationally in the framework of bilateral, regional and global cooperation. Indonesia took part in the launching of both regional interfaith dialogue initiatives such as the Regional Interfaith Dialogue within the Southeast Asia and Southwest Pacific countries in 2004 and the Asia-Europe (ASEM) Interfaith Dialogue in 2005. This respective dialogue has become a major annual event.

Indonesia will remain active and supportive of the Alliance of Civilizations, initiated by the Government of Spain together with the Government of Turkey and the Secretary General of the UN, as well as the Non-Aligned Movement Interfaith Dialogue initiated by the government of the Philippines.

Indonesia has also initiated a series of Global Inter-Media Dialogues, with Norway as our co-sponsor, to promote awareness among members of the media so that they can be an effective instrument for the promotion of mutual understanding and appreciation among the world's different faiths and cultures since 2006. Indonesia believes that mass media has played a pivotal role in combating ignorance and prejudice between faiths, cultures and civilizations.

Bilaterally, Indonesia has had a wide array of initiatives with a number of partner countries, including Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Ethiopia, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Hellenic Republic, the Holy See, Hungary, Lebanon, Serbia, Spain, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

Indonesia also conducted a dialogue between Indonesia's interfaith leaders with members of the European Parliament in June and October 2011 with the objective to share information on how the Government of Indonesia manages its cultural and religious diversity, particularly to protect the minority groups in the country.

All these dialogues are important because it could empower moderate groups of religious leaders, scholars, think-tanks, and media as well as encourage their participation in interfaith dialogues in order to spread the spirit of moderation to the grassroots level, to strengthen people's religious understanding as well as increase tolerance to other religions which in turn will prevent the influence of radicalism.

The other important goal of the dialogue is to create networking and to establish an international cooperation that is easily executed by groups in grassroots levels.

III. Indonesian Interfaith Scholarship

For the first time this year, Indonesia will offer scholarships to 15 awardees from the European Union with the objectives, among others are to enhance their understanding on Indonesia's pluralistic and heterogeneous society, the moderate strain of Islam in Indonesia; and Indonesia's current stature as a modern country that uphold democracy and human rights.

15 scholarships are awarded to 8 (eight) staffers of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Committee on Human Rights, Committee on Women's Right and Gender Equality, Delegation to ASEAN in the European Parliament; 3 (three) staffers of the Directorate of Asia and the Pacific (Southeast Asia) and the Directorate of Global and Multilateral Issues (Democracy and Human Rights) in the European External Action Service (EEAS); 1 (one) staff from DG Home Affairs in the European Commission; and 3 (three) analyst from 3 prominent *think-tanks* based in Brussels.

They are expected to depart to Jakarta, Indonesia from Amsterdam (Schiphol) on Saturday, 4 August 2012 and depart from Jakarta back to Amsterdam (Schiphol) on Friday, 24 August 2012. During their stay in Indonesia, there will be interesting programs arranged for the awardees such as visits that combine with dialogues in various religious and cultural sites in Jogjakarta, Semarang (Java), and one city in Sumatera/Kalimantan, and Bali. In order to create mutual understanding, the awardees are also given the opportunity to talk about European Union and/or their respective countries in the various academic institutions attended by academicians and students. The official opening of the program is scheduled to take place on 6 August 2012 in Jakarta by the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

Finally all the awardees are requested to submit 1.000 words article/short story of any topics from their visit to Indonesia to the Embassy/Mission of the Republic of Indonesia for documentation and publication.

Indonesia will be responsible for the international air fare (Amsterdam-Jakarta-Amsterdam) by Garuda Indonesia; as well as the local transportation, accommodation, meals, allowance and health insurance during their visit in Indonesia.

(Source: Mission of the Republic of Indonesia to the European Union)