

Statement


by

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Director General, ICWA

on the occasion of

**'60th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations
between
India and the Republic of Indonesia**



at

Sapru House, New Delhi

July 27, 2012

Salamat Datang!

Your Excellency, Dr. R. M. Marty M. Natalegawa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, Sri Sanjay Singh, Secretary (East), M.E.A., Your Excellency Lt. Gen. (Retd) Andi Muhammad Ghalib, the Indonesian Ambassador, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to extend a warm welcome to you all. The Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) is particularly grateful to His Excellency the Foreign Minister. He has graciously spared time to pay a visit to our institution for an interactive session with this distinguished audience. As you are aware, the minister will share his reflections on the 'Indonesian View of the World'.

Dr. Marty Natalegawa has been the Foreign Minister of his country since 21 October 2009. Earlier, he served as Permanent Representative to the United Nations for two years. Prior to his assignment in New York, he was Indonesia's Ambassador to the UK and Ireland. During his illustrious diplomatic career, he served as Spokesmen of the Foreign Ministry, Director General for ASEAN Cooperation and also the Chief of Staff to the Foreign Minister. Clearly, he brings a rich blend of diplomatic and political experience to his present august office.

The minister also comes with a highly impressive academic background. He earned his B.Sc degree from the London School of Economics and Masters from Corpus Christi College, University of Cambridge. He obtained his Doctor of Philosophy from the Australian National University.

While delving a little deeper, I noticed that our chief guest was born in Bandung. This establishes a special connection between him and us. As is well known, ICWA had played a key role in organizing the Asian Relations Conference in March-April 1947 as well as the subsequent conference devoted

to the cause of independence of Indonesia in January 1949. It also assisted in organizing the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in April 1955. Dr. A. Appadorai, the first Secretary General of ICWA, was tasked to serve in the joint secretariat of Bandung Conference.

Much time has elapsed since then, but what has not changed is the abiding interest in Asia of ICWA, a premier foreign policy think-tank and 'an institution of national importance.'

Indonesia has indeed emerged as an important player in the evolving geo-strategic matrix of Asia. It represents a successful growth story, a stable polity and a flourishing democracy. Riding on the rise of Asia and the global South, Indonesia is set to play a discourse-shaping role, both in global and continental affairs. A new sense of confidence and activism is displayed by its leaders today.

In this backdrop, we look forward to listening to the Foreign Minister at a time when pundits debate about Asia's prospects in the 21st century. It would be invaluable for us to learn about Indonesia's worldview. What are the key challenges Asia faces today? How will major power relationships shape the continent in coming decades? How should we read the changing contours of our region which is variously described as East Asia, Asia-Pacific and now even Indo-Pacific? We might be particularly keen on obtaining some insights about the Foreign Minister's recent hectic shuttle diplomacy which helped ASEAN to overcome a difficult and unprecedented situation, created at the 45th ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Phnom Penh.

This audience would also be interested in indicators as to where India figures in Indonesia's worldview. India-Indonesia relations have been blessed with a rich history and a multi-dimensional character. Those of us who have had the privilege to serve in Indonesia - and I see several of our colleagues

present here who belong to this category - are fond of citing Rabindranath Tagore who spoke of this special relationship as a journey of 'two companion souls.' This journey began long before the arrival of colonialism and has continued after its demise.

Indonesia and India are now leading emerging economies. They are 'natural partners', devoted to preservation of unity amidst diversity, democratic values and inclusive governance. Happily, our relations have been progressing very well, especially in recent years. The minister will perhaps share his assessment of the outcome of the joint commission meeting that has just ended.

All key elements that symbolize a healthy relationship appear to be in place. Yet, a view persists among foreign policy intellectuals that the two countries are capable to attain much more through closer cooperation and candid dialogue, particularly at Track II level. The question is : are they ready to leverage their dialogue and cooperation in order to tackle major global and regional challenges? I am sure the speaker will touch on these and other pertinent issues.

Dear friends, I express, once again, our immense joy in welcoming the distinguished Foreign Minister of Indonesia.

Thank you very much for your attention.
