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# Discussion Report Talking ASEAN

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on

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Outlook on Viet Nam's Chairmanship  
of ASEAN Hopes and Expectations

Jakarta, December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019



## Introduction

On Tuesday, 3rd December 2019, The Habibie Center hosted a Talking ASEAN public discussion entitled “**Outlook on Vietnam’s Chairmanship of ASEAN: Hopes and Expectations**” at The Habibie Center Building, Jakarta. This Talking ASEAN featured **H.E. Amb. Ade Padmo Sarwono** (Permanent Representative of Indonesia to ASEAN), **Drs. Teuku Rezasyah, Ph.D.** (Associate Professor, International Relations Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, UNPAD) and **Prof. Aleksius Jemadu, Ph.D.** (Professor in International Politics, Universitas Pelita Harapan) as speakers, with **Mr. A. Ibrahim Almuttaqi** (Head of ASEAN Studies Program, The Habibie Center) as the moderator.


The objectives of this discussion were to: (1) discuss what opportunities and challenges faces Viet Nam in its upcoming chairmanship of ASEAN in 2020; (2) reflect on the main outcomes/issues arising from the 35th ASEAN Summit and related meetings and how this will impact ASEAN in 2020; (3) produce possible recommendations for Viet Nam regarding its ASEAN chairmanship 2020.

This discussion report summarizes the key points of each resource person, as well as the question and answer session that followed.

# PRESENTATION FROM THE PANELIST



**H.E. Amb. Ade Padmo Sarwono**  
(Permanent Representative  
of Indonesia to ASEAN)



Ambassador Ade Padmo Sarwono began his presentations by acknowledging the presence of other members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN as well as the distinguished speakers and participants. Noting that the Permanent Representative of Vietnam to ASEAN would have been better positioned to talk about Viet Nam's 2020 chairmanship, Ambassador Ade nevertheless said he would try his best to explain based on his understanding of the topic.

He then highlighted the theme of Viet Nam's 2020 chairmanship of 'Cohesive and Responsive'. He informed the audience that the theme would usually be explained further during the ASEAN Foreign Ministerial Retreat in early January 2020. These included details such as the priorities and objectives for the year ahead. Ambassador Ade then gave an outline of five elements of the 'Cohesive' theme: (1) Strengthen ASEAN Unity and Solidarity; (2) Regional Integration and Connectivity; (3) Promote ASEAN Communalism and the Awareness of it; (4) Deepen ASEAN Engagement with the global Community; and (5) Enhance ASEAN institutional capacity.

In the ever-changing environment facing ASEAN nowadays, there is the need to find how the regional organization can adapt while also being the best in responding to those circumstances. Viet Nam wished to make ASEAN become more responsive to the shifts taking place in the regional and global stage through strengthening ASEAN unity and solidarity. On the second

element, regional integration and connectivity, Ambassador Ade stressed the importance of realizing further the implementation the Master Plan of ASEAN Connectivity.

He also highly encouraged promoting ASEAN Identity and Awareness with more intraregional interaction. He noted public awareness on ASEAN was at 90% according to recent polls, but only one-third of them understood the substance of the regional organization. While the percentage of awareness has increased, Ambassador Ade believed that ASEAN still struggles to make citizens understand more on the three pillars of ASEAN.

Ambassador Ade also shared some views on regional integration and the Connectivity element to address the importance of the 'Industrial Revolution 4.0.' Although he does not have much understanding on the subject, he is certain that the Industrial Revolution 4.0 is significant for ASEAN, especially in terms of utilizing new technology and the millennial generation, as well as how to prevent any negative impact underlying from it.

The discussion then turned back to the issue of ASEAN awareness, where he highlighted that recent polls indicated most ASEAN citizens are most knowledgeable with economic issues within ASEAN compared to the other pillars. Ambassador Ade expressed some surprise by this finding as he believed ASEAN citizens are just as aware about political and security issues facing the region. Instead, only 64% of respondents felt that ASEAN was beneficial in terms of peace and security whereas 70% of respondents felt that ASEAN was economically beneficial for them. With regards of a prosperous




working ASEAN, 50% of citizens are concerned about having better quality jobs and 40% of them were concerned about access to jobs. This showed the difficulty on getting the proper working conditions, as Ambassador Ade took the position that ASEAN needs to do further on this issue.

Under the fourth elements of deepening ASEAN engagement and openness to partners, Ambassador Ade said that ASEAN already has a number of partners from dialogue, sectoral, and development partners. He then informed that in this year, ASEAN has established several new partnerships with other countries and that more countries have expressed their interest to have more formal engagements with ASEAN.

With the partners that have been established now, Ambassador Ade suggested to further strengthen peace and sustainable development

within ASEAN by involving the partners in order to address the challenges that existed. Viet Nam also need to take part in encouraging ASEAN members in finishing several Plans of Action. There were six plan of action that needed to be finalized by midyear; ASEAN-Russia, ASEAN-U.S., ASEAN-Canada, ASEAN-India, and ASEAN-New Zealand. Ambassdor Ade then noted the presence of the newly accredited British Ambassador to ASEAN in the audience. Ambassador Ade noted that although the United Kingdom did not yet have a formal partnership status with ASEAN, it had already assigned a fully dedicated ambassador to ASEAN. This was seen as an example of how more and more countries are interested to engage with ASEAN and to cooperate together to solve issues and challenges facing the region and the world

The last of the 'Cohesive' elements was on ASEAN institutions and mechanisms. Ambassador



Ade elaborated the need to strengthen the mechanism and function to accommodate the demand of the region's dynamic situation. He further acknowledged the criticism of ASEAN's mechanism that is said to be too bureaucratic. To minimize that, Ambassador Ade noted that efforts to streamline ASEAN's function have been encouraged. Other mechanism that has taken interest by Viet Nam is reviewing the work of ASEAN Regional Forum as it passed 10 years of working and need to be look into on the sufficiency to address the current challenge. Mr. Ade also noted the need to reviewing ASEAN blueprint and making sure that the blueprint will be available by 2025.

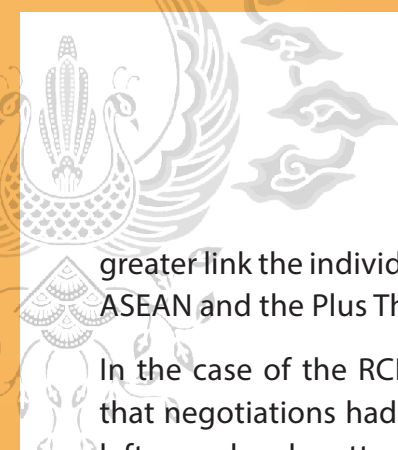
On the 'Responsive' part of Viet Nam's theme, Ambassador Ade expressed the need for ASEAN to be proactive and creative in addressing nontraditional challenges as well the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Since the last ASEAN meeting regarding these issues, there have been several outcomes such as promoting international economic linkage, strengthening ASEAN integration and connectivity, centering peace partnership and sustainable development, and strengthening ASEAN role in sustainable global economics. Ambassador Ade pointed out that 'sustainability' will be continued from Thailand's chairmanship. In addition, ASEAN also need to enhance and strengthen its adaptive capacity of performance. Similarly, Viet Nam is also looking forward to achieving this outcome, so it can be their economic priority.

Mr. Ade then discussed the hope and strategy from Indonesia on Viet Nam chairmanship. First, he stated that the CPR has supported Viet Nam's idea about improving ASEAN's institutions and

mechanisms. Following, the establishment of the new ASEAN Secretariat building in Jakarta, he noted the Indonesian Government's proposal that more regional meetings be held there. Although ministerial meetings would likely still be held in the ASEAN chair's capital, Ambassador Ade said working group or sub-working group meetings could be held in the new ASEAN Secretariat building. Doing so, he reasoned, would lead to better coordination by enabling parallel discussions/meetings to be held since the new building has greater meeting capacity. In order to tackle ASEAN multi-faceted challenges, more coordinated meeting could enable discussion across sectoral pillars.

Next, Ambassador Ade mentioned the implementation of ASEAN Outlook on Indo-pacific and Indonesia as future host of ASEAN Indo-Pacific Infrastructure and Connectivity forum. He added that as for now, it has been agreed that the forum will consist of government officials, business partners, and hopefully there will be business match-up to come up with more concrete projects that can be further finalized.

The last hope and strategy by Indonesia for Viet Nam chairmanship is to further implement the ASEAN Master Plan on Connectivity 2025 towards regional infrastructure. Ambassador Ade heavily stressed that given similar initiatives that may overlap – including China with Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI), Japan with quality infrastructure, and South Korea with New Southern Policy – there has been effort under Thailand's chairmanship to link some of these initiatives. For instance, the ASEAN Plus Three statement on connecting the connectivity, while still a political document, saw commitments to



greater link the individual cooperation between ASEAN and the Plus Three.

In the case of the RCEP, Ambassador Ade said that negotiations had finished and all that was left were legal matters which hopefully will be finished before mid-year so it can be signed at the ASEAN Summit in November 2020. He also hoped that RCEP would continue as an agreement of 16 countries including India and hoped New Delhi's concerns could be resolved. Ambassador Ade also discussed Timor Leste's application to join ASEAN which he said was an issue that Indonesia would like to see more progress. He explained that a fact finding mission looking at political-security aspects had already been conducted. Although the outcome of the mission was adequately good, fact finding missions to look at the economic and socio-cultural aspects was also needed. Ambassador Ade hoped that the issue will be finalized soon and that there would be an in-depth discussion by the ASEAN foreign ministers before the Leaders' summit in November.

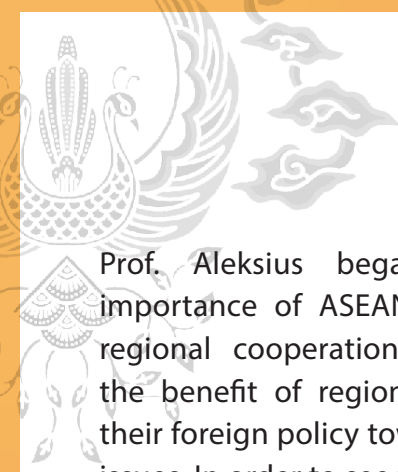
Other concerning priorities is the Code of Conduct on the South China Sea. Ambassador Ade informed that the first reading of the document has already been done and will be continued with a second reading. Although he did not participate in the meeting, based on the report that he read, it is quite tough in terms of the security aspect due to the need to have a substantive, practical, implementable, and legally binding document. Viet Nam's chairmanship also added some concerns due to its claimant status. As such he believed discussions would remain tough.

As a concluding remark, Ambassador Ade informed the participants that Indonesia was already looking forward to 2023 as Indonesia would hold the ASEAN chairmanship as well as host the G20 Summit. He encouraged think tanks to provide necessary input, ideas, and priorities for Indonesia to take up in 2023. To end, he wished Vietnam the best of luck for its chairmanship in 2020.

# PRESENTATION FROM THE PANELIST



**Prof. Aleksius Jemadu, Ph.D.**  
(Professor in International Politics,  
Universitas Pelita Harapan)



Prof. Aleksius began by discussing the importance of ASEAN for Viet Nam towards regional cooperation as the country viewed the benefit of regional platform to enhance their foreign policy towards several concerning issues. In order to see the regional cooperation, Prof. Aleksius particularize the role of United States (U.S.) through the indifference of Donald Trump's attitude towards ASEAN in the recent years. Taking into account the implications of the great powers to the region can illustrate more on Viet Nam's chairmanship on the relevant context, where the discussion can bring meaningful insight even though it would not be presented in absolute certainty.

Prof. Aleksius quoted Kishor Mahbubani that said "given Viet Nam's profile and political concern about arising china, it clearly has the most to lose if ASEAN is weakened. ASEAN provides Viet Nam with a valuable geopolitical buffer. So, it is clearly in Viet Nam's national interest to make a deep commitment to strengthen ASEAN". Through this understanding, Prof. Aleksius anticipated Viet Nam to be committed to regional cooperation and develop the current policy accordingly and in that sense, they are going to take a very serious responsibility in order to make it chairmanship success in 2020.

Viet Nam is also comfortable with ASEAN'S institutionalize concern for any type of political regime with its principle of non-interference. In that sense, Prof. Aleksius expect that Vietnam would be happy with the principle of non-interference due to their intention to avoid external actors interfering with their domestic affairs and their political system. However, from the discussion on the farthest

Viet Nam can manage the principle of non-interference, wide variety of issues that crossing national borders should be taken into account.

Prof. Aleksius raised a question on how Viet Nam, on its responsibility as the chairman in 2020, and other ASEAN members can deal in this issue that threatened democracy and human rights. In democratic country like Indonesia, he significance the interest of civil society groups to see the aforementioned issues to be discussed in recent governments attentively. They also anticipate the progress on the issues like this, not only on the economic terms.

In talking the Viet Nam's economic momentum and competitiveness, Prof. Aleksius assured the high economic growth that the country has over other ASEAN countries will be beneficial in their ASEAN chairmanship. On another note, Viet Nam is committed to adjust ASEAN as an economic entity that can be cohesive and responsive to global challenges altogether. Prof. Aleksius also showed the growing capacity that Viet Nam has to compete regionally and globally. The country has shown strong performance in sports while also increasing capital inflow. This makes Viet Nam's economic vibrancy with high economic growth and emerging strong self-confidence, even more hoping to combine these two qualities as part of enthusiasm in joining TPP. Viet Nam is very confident to compete with other developing countries and boost progressive economic cooperation at the same time, as intended to include those elements in the RCEP.

The discussion later followed to Viet Nam's multiple strategic partnership in all direction. Prof. Aleksius showed how Viet Nam can



navigate its current foreign policy by giving the impression that it goes to all direction in order to build the whole partnerships without losing the commitment on each interest. The country combined those partnerships and expressed their interests on the vis-à-vis all the great powers.

Then, Prof. Aleksius elaborated the five priorities of Viet Nam in ASEAN chairmanship and the need to look all behind the paper and the importance of looking back on the concerning issues from the latest ASEAN meetings and how the interference of other bodies in implementing the agreement in the contestation of international interest among ASEAN countries. As much as the discussion goes on the cooperation among the ten countries, Prof. Aleksius propose that the competition in the region in engaging with external actors should not be left behind on the discussion. For example, most of them are

competing to build access to China's growing market or inviting as much as possible foreign direct investment from China.

The five priorities of Viet Nam's ASEAN chairmanship are outlined through the presentation slide consisting of promoting ASEAN's role and active contributions to the maintenance of peace, security, and stability in the region, promoting regional connectivity, enhancing the region's ability to adapt and take advantage of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, raising awareness of ASEAN's identity, Stepping up partnership for peace and sustainable development with countries all around the world, and enhancing the ability to adapt alongside the effective operation of the ASEAN apparatus.

In the main theme of ASEAN unity, Prof. Aleksius brought the audience to discuss how to keep


ASEAN united in dealing with the external world. He suggested that the main message behind the five priorities mentioned before is to see integrated ASEAN that more cohesive as an entity. Behind understanding the competing interest among 10 member countries, Prof. Aleksius believe that Viet Nam will do its best to come up with unity of voice that is not only on economics but also other issues. It remains to be seen how this will be implemented in reality because it is not easy for Viet Nam to combine and find the agreement among these ten member countries.

Then, the presentation followed in talking the narrative of the discourses behind the adoption of the theme; cohesiveness and responsiveness. Prof. Aleksius tried to make interpretations behind this important theme. First, ASEAN cohesiveness is needed to strengthen Viet Nam ground strategy to counterbalance China on the inevitable economic domination in Southeast Asia. ASEAN also is needed as a platform in order to deal with great powers in a way can be beneficial for ASEAN and Viet Nam itself. Second, the cohesiveness will serve as the regional platform to increase bargaining position and negotiation for the final draft of Code of Conduct in South China Sea. While the finalization is in the process as for today, Prof. Aleksius agreed with the ambassador's opinion in this matter, that it will not be easy and tough, yet the formulation between ASEAN and China are appreciated greatly as a way to achieve stability that needed by all towards stable external environments and security for all the country members in the region. Third, Viet Nam seek to reproduce its economic success at the regional level, in which ultimately strengthen

the legitimacy of each political regime inside and outside the country. Prof. Aleksius takes opinion on this matter, centering their need to have recognition on the good and workable system that they want external world to see. He compared on how China sees the system in Indonesia works very well to produce real benefit for our economy so he understands that Viet Nam can be in the same position to convince other ASEAN members to trust their system for the goodness of many people.

Prof. Aleksius mentioned the other three political narrative that also influenced the choice of the cohesive and responsive theme. In addition of the economic issues that Viet Nam has concerned on the region, the issue of human rights and democracy with an issue like in Myanmar with the genocide of the Rohingya has become part of big and global issue. Prof. Aleksius formulate a question regarding this real issue that cannot be avoided of the solution that can be found in order to improve credibility of regional cooperation. His question was *'Will ASEAN under Viet Nam chairmanship will be willing to go the extra mile to pressurize Myanmar on the case of non-interference principle violation?'* He stressed on how far the ASEAN members can go to discuss about his because he disbelieves that any country will be indifferent to this issue and they surely demand the attention to deal with the issue that happening in the proximity of Southeast Area.

In another case, the repression of Cambodia opposition also a big issue that ASEAN member need to comes up with unity in order for the ruling party of Prime Minister of Cambodia can recognize the political rights of the growing



problems from the opposition. Although this is a domestic issue, Prof. Aleksius also mentioned the concerning impact to human being, justice, and people that seek the answer from ASEAN. So, Prof. Aleksius raised a series of question whether the issue is part of ASEAN problem or a fully domestic problem that should not be waste by violating the principle of non-interference, but the answer still unknown and his point was to acknowledge the real issue and the need to take action. On another case, Prof. Aleksius doubted whether Viet Nam was interested in dealing with human rights and democracy issues. Through his observation, on the premise of role in Southeast Asia region in dealing issues of human rights remain the standard of normative attitude among ASEAN members. He concluded this point as the clear message towards ASEAN charter and the question is to protect sovereignty stronger to not be interfered by any external power that mentioned several times in ASEAN charter about this issue.

Prof. Aleksius felt that Viet Nam chairmanship should be put in wider context in the sense that it has multi-direction strategic partnership with great powers other than China, such as, with U.S., India, Japan, and also Russia in all directions. Through this, Viet Nam has navigated their foreign policy by inviting all of these great powers to be in this strategic partnership in Hanoi. He added that Viet Nam's complex relationship with China is deeply embedded in investment relationship, although they also do that to other ASEAN countries in order to seek human inclusivity. In the era when all ASEAN countries competing to build access in this growing economy, there is also historical and

territorial dispute in South China Sea where Viet Nam hold assertive policy as the claimant of the area hampered by the pragmatic attitude by other claimants. He further addresses that this is a big challenge for Viet Nam, looking on Philippines's President Rodrigo Duterte forego pragmatical policy in facing China's assertion. Although Duterte's indifference attitude than his predecessor is not going to change the declaration of permanent arbitration, but the result of their decision is real.

Prof. Aleksius also believed that Indonesia is reluctant to revitalize leadership role in ASEAN due to President Jokowi's keen attention to domestic agenda. He suggested to discuss on the matter how President is more concerned on the instrumental meaning of foreign policy to accomplish domestic agenda. Prof. Aleksius disagreed with the view that the president wants to execute projects as a international agenda, but rather wants to leave the legacy of domestic reformer and using foreign policy in order to make domestic agenda successful despite being a big challenge. He then questioned whether Indonesia still willing to play a leading role. Those are the things that Prof. Aleksius expected to discuss further on the affection of regional cooperation.

Complying with Ambassador Ade, Prof. Aleksius recognize that there is different interpretation on Code of Conduct that lead to difficulty in producing the document that can be both binding and acceptable by everyone. According to Prof. Aleksius, Code of Conduct is part of rule-based regional activity and should be binding under the expectation that it surely contributes to regional stability. However, he also



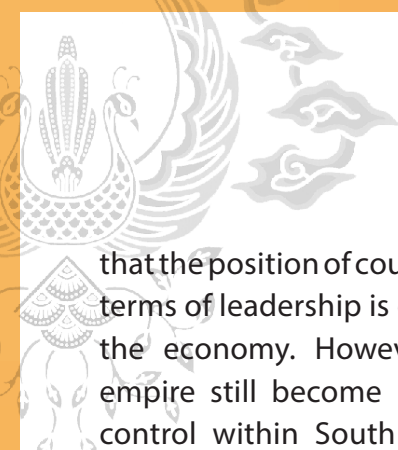
considered that China's very own interpretation for Code of Conduct is to manage interaction of non-claimants without changing their de facto control. He then raised concerns on the China's military infrastructure on South China Sea's island and concluded that it will not be easy to discuss the issue without realizing the reality of interference. So, all of the stakeholders need to open the reality and accept the existing challenges on this issue.

Prof. Aleksius emphasizes on the ASEAN centrality, obedience to international law and freedom of navigation as the vital interest of Southeast Asia countries. He assumes that China insisting to the problem of law violation and keeping their pride over the sovereignty in this security issue should be discussed through ASEAN mechanism. Prof. Aleksius expected that China would object any interference from other people as it is only the matter of China and

ASEAN.

The presentation continued to discuss on normative and moral extortion policy that involves the combination of great power and middle power. Prof. Aleksius stressed that ASEAN has the desire to defend international norms, even though China has used economic instruments such as trade and FDI infrastructure financing to cope ASEAN members. He believes that it has been done with Cambodia and it is within his disbelief that they will be any reason to prevent China to doing the same thing as other ASEAN countries as it becomes compulsory. Prof. Aleksius is certain that the instrument is effective as far as a great power can concern.

In another note, challenge in economic leadership is preferable while hegemony or domination are regarded. Prof. Aleksius referred



that the position of countries in Southeast Asia in terms of leadership is good as it also benefitted the economy. However, the hegemony and empire still become problems. Moreover, the control within South China Sea affected the maritime situation of Belt and Road Initiatives.

Prof. Aleksius believe that Viet Nam will do its best to convince India on the strategic importance of RCEP as substantiate of India's policy, so it can remain to be seen that India can be convinced to become part of RCEP or not. India's dilemma on this matter should be taken into account as it would be the end of their active policy. Nevertheless, signing RCEP would be to subdivide the economic interest to domestic constituent of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. At last, Prof. Aleksius wished to see how India would find the solutions to this dilemma next year.

On Viet Nam and Indo-pacific cooperation, Prof. Aleksius suggest that the stakeholders would be committed to the ASEAN outlook of the Indo-pacific beside at the same time, welcome the engagement of other great powers such as Japan, India, U.S., and China. He contempt that Hanoi will accept the outlook of Indo-pacific although not in dispense of strategic partnership with all of the great powers. Following to that, Viet Nam would likely welcome Indonesia initiatives to host the Indo-Pacific infrastructure and connectivity in 2020 in next year, but mainly on the basis of pragmatic consideration to support its economic development.

To finish his presentation, Prof. Aleksius makes points on what he had delivered throughout

the discussion. First, Indonesia's position on the ASEAN chairmanship requires diplomatic steel to manage Viet Nam and ASEAN as a whole in the midst of rapidly changing environment. Second, ASEAN is an important regional platform for Viet Nam's policy that dan be used as a bargaining power to manage the complex relationship with rising China. There is also challenges on persuading India to be part of RCEP as it remains to be seen what concession will be given to ensure its participation in RCEP next year. The next highlight is prioritizing human rights and democracy in the future agenda for ASEAN. In addition, the discussion of Code of Conduct of South China Sea remains in different interpretation towards the content and agreement. The combination of pragmatic attitude of some members in competing to follow China's economic favors alongside Indonesia reluctant to revitalize regional leadership constitute to a real challenge for Viet Nam in enhancing ASEAN cohesiveness and responsiveness. Prof. Aleksius finally suggest Viet Nam as a chairman of ASEAN to convince U.S. especially President Donald Trump on his indifferent attitude towards ASEAN could damage strategic interest in the region, and even more, disturbing the existed equilibrium.

# PRESENTATION FROM THE PANELIST



**Drs. Teuku Rezasyah, Ph.D.**  
(Dean, Faculty of Humanity,  
President University)



Last to speak was Drs Teuku who wished to highlight was Viet Nam would likely do as Chair of ASEAN next year as follows: (1). As a spokesperson of the regional organization, (2). As a chief executive in chairing and facilitating official meetings and task forces, (3). Tabling new initiatives and programs to advance regional cooperation, and (4). Doing informal role as a consensus builder and to exhibit leadership and diplomatic procurement to find common ground among the diverging views. Drs. Teuku was discouraged by the challenge that came out from Viet Nam in playing this role but put Indonesia's full trust on the country's leadership. He then spread out the objectives of the dialogue as to discuss opportunities and challenges that Viet Nam will face in its upcoming chairmanship in ASEAN 2020, reflect on the main outcomes on issues arising from 35th ASEAN Summit and related meeting with the impact towards ASEAN in 2020, and to produce the possible recommendations for Viet Nam regarding its ASEAN Chairmanship 2020.

From Drs. Teuku opinion, Viet Nam is very confident to perform the role as ASEAN chairman due to the stable national leadership, hardworking tradition of its society, and the proven capacity as a fast learner when it comes to global competition. He then shared his experience when helping Viet Nam producing coffee and introducing them with silat around 1976. At that time, Viet Nam visited Indonesia and being treated by President Soeharto as they have respected each other through the similar experience of gaining independence

by shedding blood, sweat, tears, and pray. President Soeharto said privately to his interpreter, Mr. Widodo Setyo, that as a leader he understands the feeling of each other and showed appreciation towards Viet Nam by wearing their wristwatch. President Soeharto then recalled bad production season in Viet Nam and suggest sending around two million ton of rice. Not forgetting keeping Vietnamese pride, President Soeharto asked them to return the favor back when it is convenient because Indonesia did not want to challenge the pride of its close friend. President Soeharto then said that both countries have similar fertile land that good for coffee plantation and asked Viet Nam to send their best engineer or coffee plantations people to come to Indonesia to be trained by the governor. To the result, Viet Nam has become Indonesia's main competitor in coffee export. Drs. Teuku did not forget to mention Silat, which Vietnamese has been progressing a lot with producing gold medals. This showed that Vietnamese are strong, committed, and ready to learn. Drs. Teuku is glad that they are the next chairman of ASEAN.

Drs. Teuku find Viet Nam's confidence is good for ASEAN as a whole because it means that the regional will be led by strong leaders as an institution. In addition, he also recognizes that Viet Nam have domestic confidence as the fastest growing economy in Southeast Asia with GDP growth of 7% and above the region with average of 4%. In retrospect, Indonesia still struggling in this matter. He expresses his judgment that Viet Nam have the tendency to perform very well due to strong domestic pressure to offset the risk emanating from the rising dependence from external partners as Viet Nam need to



enhance and strengthen intra-ASEAN trade. This whole data was quoted by Drs. Teuku from investors in Viet Nam.

He then concerned on Hanoi's theme for 2020 ASEAN chairmanship on cohesive and response. Drs. Teuku noted on the statement issued by Prime Minister Phuc that need to further socialize inside ASEAN as it failed to have detail focus on fostering the bloc's sustainable cohesiveness through consolidating solidarity and unity, increasing collecting connectivity, to further intensifying values and identities of ASEAN Community, improving the efficiency of ASEAN apparatus and stepping up the relation of bloc's partner in global community.

Drs. Teuku also take opinion on being the product of Indonesia's new order as the world 'bloc' is very sensitive due to the meaning interpreted as dire competition in the sense of survival at the finest for those in the age of 50 to 60. He suggested that there is need to be better

explanation to ASEAN colleague, especially to ASEAN 5.

The challenges that Drs. Teuku pointed in Viet Nam chairmanship is the strong critics from world media on the issue of religious freedom and freedom of association. There is also concern that he noted on ho Viet Nam may use its chairmanship to express concern towards China on the bilateral sea border and South China Sea. In addition, there is also border dispute that Viet Nam have different system than Indonesia that relied in UNCLOS. It is unknown for Dr. Teuku if Viet Nam will introduce this issue with their capacity as a chairman of ASEAN.

Drs. Teuku takes note on the need to reflect from the outcome of 35th ASEAN Summit and related meetings that impacted ASEAN in 2020. According to his opinion, ASEAN need to be more focus, for instance, in dealing on the idea of ASEAN centrality. He assumed that ASEAN never had any detail and explanation on

the meaning of ASEAN centrality, and it is also surrounded by other competing ideas such as Indo-Pacific, BRI, APEC, TPP, and RCEP. Through this, Drs. Teuku sees Viet Nam may have the capacity to glue all of the ideas for the sake their own national interest, although it is still debatable.

There is also needs for ASEAN to do more than just talking but walking through the long and winding road ahead, Drs. Teuku continued. He referred to Chairman's seven pages statements that should be encouraged further socialization inside the member countries, especially for younger generations. Drs. Teuku shared his personal opinion on this matter, discussing further on how Indonesia's media did not pay attention to what happened in Thailand last month as there was less topic discussion on television and radio. He questioned on the meaning of this pattern and whether ASEAN become irrelevant. He then stressed on ASEAN as one of important subjects in Universities as there is the danger of becoming less relevant if it is not carefully look further due to competing institution around Asia-Pacific, BRI, APEC, and RCEP.

Drs. Teuku outlined possible recommendations to end his presentation towards Viet Nam chairmanship in 2020. First, he considered the arising importance of the Millenials inside ASEAN alongside the growing digital economy of the ten-member countries. He noted that there is importance in encouraging the growth of local startup unicorns and enrich off-trainers with digital literacy as well as supporting the growth of medium enterprises operated by millennials. Drs. Teuku raised the importance

to be aware on this matter as millennials need to be checked further on their knowledge on ASEAN.

Second, he suggested to utilize uncertainties following the US-China trade war as the way to encourage ASEAN members to do local reforms and ending the remaining trade barriers in order to attract FDI into ASEAN. This is important, as he said, because inside ASEAN there will be competing investment. As ASEAN experienced competition and more investment coming to China, this become strictly important.

He then considering the impact from fourth industrial revolution that might threaten employment and the well-being of baby boomers and X-Generations. This is important for ASEAN, according to Drs. Teuku, to produce a specific policy aimed to empower citizen in their own community. He analyzed that baby boomers and generation x seemed to be forgotten in the discussion, even though those generation still active. He speculated that Indonesia millennials are yet to come forwards.

The next recommendation from Drs. Teuku to spread ASEAN security bonus to Korean peninsula by promoting further summit. Under this case, he suggests that ASEAN need initiatives to inform top leadership with DPRK, ROK, U.S., and PRC and to be done in capital city in one of ASEAN countries. As it already been done in Viet Nam and Singapore, Drs. Teuku believe that Indonesia is the most preferred countries to do this. Lastly, Drs. Teuku noted this is the time to establish a certified advance leadership school in order to prepare future leaders of ASEAN to possess similar vision on the future of the region.



# QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION



## Questions

### **Ambassador Phasporn Sangasubana:**

She noted from academics that Viet Nam appears to be on the fast lane of economic development and asked whether during Viet Nam chairmanship next year they will be able to 'graduate' from the CLMV.

### **Amb. Hasjim Djalal:**

He asked whether there is any prospect that ASEAN under Viet Nam leadership will encourage feasibility of cooperative partnership between ASEAN, SAARC, and Shanghai Cooperation. He questioned further will there be any prospect on that matter.

### **Ms. Netty Muharni:**

She put the question asking whether ASEAN priorities will contribute to the 2025 ASEAN Economic agenda and further asked what the speakers think on ASEAN's priority in the next 5 to 10 years.

### **Amb. Ibrahim Yusuf:**

He looked on the possibility of Viet Nam to be trustworthy in dealing with triad of important issues that affected regional power such as ASEAN outlook of Indo-pacific and the external powers from China and United States. He asked next how Viet Nam's leadership transform the regional to deal with India.

## Zambi:

He took opinion for someone who can learn economic growth in Viet Nam and the possibility of Indonesia to make their government adopting rule and regulations from Viet Nam to grow economic issues. He further questioned how Indonesia adopted the rule if it exists or the reason behind if it cannot be done.

## Responses

### H.E. Amb. Ade Padmo Sarwono:

Ambassador Ade firstly answered the question proposed by Mr. HasjimDjalal as the issue is what commonly faced in ASEAN. He brings a little bit of background that many countries and regional organizations want to engage with ASEAN in order to establish regular dialogue meeting, especially in ministerial level. He took note on recent event this year, where Indonesia foreign minister asked ASEAN Secretariat to examine and give assessment towards interaction with regional organization due to the amount of request meetings and unimplemented themes. While this is good, said Amb. Ade, it can also create pressure from the other side, even more with foreign minister due to the usual sideline meeting with UNGA that also include ASEAN. So, there is a need to have further assessment. Sadly, only one regional organization, beside European Union, that committed in dealing with ASEAN. The rest of them, especially south, has not done anything over the past few years. Under his personal view, Amb. Ade noted that there is competition among them. For instance, Shanghai Cooperation may have some kind relationship with ASEAN, yet not included in ASEAN membership instead within the secretariat. There is also engagement that have been done in the form of Plan of Action but without further communication, even though they have request to engage with ASEAN through Committee of Permanent Representatives. The nonexistence of regional embassies around ASEAN Secretariat also significant in creating ineffectiveness to engage more freely.

Following to the next question, Amb. Ade mentioned the agenda of SDGs in five years, specifically in how Viet Nam and other next chairmanship can ecologically cope up with Industrial 4.0 with the presence of millennials. He then referred on how Indonesian government are thinking to have fewer days of work in order to renewed conventional jobs to creative jobs that suitable for young generation. Amb. Ade also take concern on the arising initiation of demonstration by young audience as they concern to the uncertainties in the next 5 years and believe that government still not prepared on the things that will happen in the future. Through this, he suggested that ASEAN should discuss more on what will be done for future generations in the span of 5 years.

To answer the question from Ibrahim Yusuf, Amb. Ade assumed that it will be a tough challenge for Viet Nam to navigate with all powers under ASEAN Indo-Pacific Outlook. Although, based on his point of view, the most important thing on Asia-Pacific principle is the inclusiveness that expressed not against anyone and assured that there are many initiatives by others would only be successful within ASEAN support due to provided accommodation and neutrality. On the last question about adapting Viet Nam regulations, Amb. Ade referred to Joko Widodo statement to the possibility to streamline

our regulations within our democratic system under the five priorities in the next five years under bureaucratic regulations.

Finally, as there is still one that have not been expressed, Amb. Ade mentioned Indonesia expectation towards Viet Nam chairmanship due to previous statement from Prof. Aleksius regarding the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights to have more protection element on the conference that has often been criticized by academicians, CSO, and the public.

#### **Prof. Aleksius Jemadu, Ph.D.:**

Prof. Aleksius stressed on how Viet Nam need to gain recognition from international community on their system that branded as legitimate, not only in the eyes of its people but also in externally. He elaborates more on the reasoning of the difficulty to find an alternative to the system and the need to stick to those as the only choice to be successful. Through his opinion, sticking to the system can strengthen their legitimacy as it can be accepted to works well and cannot be replaced. The underlying reason of his opinion is showed by the courage that Viet Nam has in TPP under the unique domestic system without afraid in competing with other develop countries, as it is more aggressive than RCEP. Viet Nam will eventually continue to improve their economic and adopt new technologies, supported by having not big issue to maintain political stability. He then suggested to add good governance and culture of efficiency to better democracy. In the light of time-consuming that hampered democracy to be more efficient and low-cost economy, there is the need to make thing uncomplicated.

It is also not easy to build political stability in democratic country, even though there is some positive element with the existence of social political cause in building the stability. Although social political cause is not as high as country that need political stability on the basis of north-centralized system, one party system is politically efficient. Yet, the system will lead to high social political cause, especially in multi-ethnic country like Indonesia. So, Prof. Aleksius certain that efficiency and good regulations are important, but not in the expense of democratic favor that have been built.

He then discussed the effectiveness of regional cooperation. According to the theory that he referred to, the effectiveness of regional cooperation is likely depends on the level of institutionalization. Prof. Aleksius sensed a problem by regional cooperation that is initiated by small and middle-power countries. He referred to ASEAN and suggested to not expect much on the institutionalization due to strategic interests from great powers. Most cases, he believes, began to stick with informative language that lies on power politics.

#### **Drs. Teuku Rezasyah, Ph.D.:**

Regarding Viet Nam, Drs. Teuku believe that the country has graduate from CLNV. Under his previous statement that saying Viet Nam is a fast learner, there is no need to declare whether they have passed the CLNV. He assumed that Viet Nam possibly learning from Singapore when being asked what kind of country they are and answered as develop developing country. As much Drs. Teuku find the answer fascinating, he also thinks that Viet Nam learning from this kind of tradition. He knows for sure that they have passed the CLNV status as their economic growth is worth to be considered.

On the next matter, Drs. Teuku wondered why there is no close association with the south. Although Indonesia is the biggest country in the Southeast Asia and in counterpart, India is the biggest country in South Asia, there is no further interaction between both regions. He suggested to think big, start small, and move fast to initiate complete cooperation with South Countries. For instance, ASEAN-South scholarship or soccer team consisting South and ASEAN to show close relation between region.

In facing ASEAN 2025, Drs. Teuku certain that the region has progressed in reality. It can be proven from data in World Bank, UNDP, and Heritage Foundation that showed most countries has gained freedom, although there are still some that less free but engage under ASEAN economic community. This can be seen as the region has ten in value but still playing in different level of fields. Drs. Teuku also think that SDGs should be checked to see how much growth that has been done at the moment, even though the standard may vary differently. In the regard of Viet Nam quality that linked to RCEP, Drs. Teuku think that Indonesia has better position than Viet Nam to engage with India and China. He also suggested the possibility of middle-power coalition to work together on this matter.

Drs. Teuku then retold the story from his teacher, Mr. CTM Luhut Lima on the what can be learn from Viet Nam. In 1965, where Viet Nam is undergoing the war, Indonesia planned to engage with Viet Nam. LIPI in other side, identified the country Viet Nam and found that at the year of 1975, Viet Nam had five thousands of International Ph.D and heart scientists coming from U.s and European countries. This is exposed how they maintain the quality of their human resources in spite of having hardship. As they are now free since 1975, Drs. Teuku could not believe how many heart scientists that they have now and Indonesia need to learn from this.

He also shared his experience when he studied overseas and saw Vietnamese ambassador visiting markets and talk to the shopkeeper. In addition, the secretary of Ambassador also doing the same thing asking prices and how the market runs. Drs. Teuku was fascinated by this as it shows the reason why Vietnamese market improved. He also mentioning the reason why LG shifted from Indonesia to Viet Nam and helped the country to produce 30% of GDP, as he seen from data on FPCI. Despite the good governance and good corporate governance, Vietnamese is a hard worker and great learners.



### **ABOUT ASEAN STUDIES PROGRAM**

The ASEAN Studies Program was established on February 24, 2010, to become a center of excellence on ASEAN related issues, which can assist in the development of the ASEAN Community by 2015. The Habibie Center through its ASEAN Studies Program, alongside other institutions working towards the same goal, hopes to contribute to the realization of a more people-oriented ASEAN that puts a high value on democracy and human rights.

The objective of the ASEAN Studies Program is not merely only to conduct research and discussion within academic and government circles, but also to strengthen public awareness by forming a strong network of civil society in the region that will be able to help spread the ASEAN message. With the establishment of ASEAN Studies Program, The Habibie Center aims to play its part within our capabilities to the ASEAN regional development.

### **ABOUT TALKING ASEAN**

Talking ASEAN is a monthly public dialogue held at The Habibie Center in Jakarta. Covering a wide array of issues related to ASEAN, Talking ASEAN addresses topics of: Economic Integration, Socio-cultural, & Democracy, human rights and regional peace, among others. Featuring local and visiting experts, Talking ASEAN is one of a series of twelve dialogues regularly held each month and open to a target audience consisting of ASEAN officials, foreign ambassadors & diplomats, academics, university students, businesses, and the media.

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