



Speaker

The House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia

Speech of the Speaker of the Indonesian House of
Representatives
HE Agung Laksono
at the 40th Annual World Conference of the
International Association of Political Consultants (IAPC)

Bali, November 14th, 2007

Distinguished Leaders and Members of the International Association of Political Consultants, Mr. Pri Sulisto, Chairman of the Asia Pacific of the Political Consultants Community, Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, and Participants of the IAPC Conference.

Greetings to you all.

I welcome the holding of the Annual World Conference of the IAPC. It is remarkable to know that this is the 40th annual meeting of such an important community. As politician and Speaker of the House I have been thinking hard how to address your community in a proper and meaningful way, given the fact that you are political consultants doing analyses based on what we politicians are doing and the way we are behaving. However it is an honor to be with you and to talk to you about our common

concern-as I am certain you have the same concern also-on political development and democracy.

Democracy building is crucial in our transition to develop a healthy and responsible political system. As you know, diversity and pluralism mark the nature of the Indonesian social structure, where differences in ethnicity, dialects, and geographic conditions are often seen as challenges to our national integration. The making of the Indonesian Nation as envisioned by our founding fathers is to build a dignified, strong and unified state that serves the people and bring the whole nation to stability, advancement, peace, security and prosperity.

Following the 1998 major political change, Indonesia embraced democracy at its most, the Indonesian House of Representatives retained its functions stated in the Constitution to legislate, oversee and prepare the budget. The House has also been entrusted with additional powers in line with its role to control the government in the implementation of laws and policies. The Parliament and the government have equal rights to introduce laws, and the deliberation on the introduction of new bills in the House involves the government and the whole society through open public hearing, although the House has its final say in passing the law, any bills that are passed in the House will effectively become law with or without the President's consent after 30 days. However while Parliament is enhancing its function to oversee the implementation of public policies, we are not acting as enemy or "political monster" to

the executive, rather we share a common platform with the government which is aimed at creating better future for all Indonesians.

The House of Representatives is actually a House of many political parties. The 2004 election resulted in the forming of 10 factions or party caucus in the Parliament. The House rules for one party to have 13 seats the least to allow for forming a faction, while parties under this minimum number are allowed to join other factions. With 10 political groupings in the House, efforts to reach agreement and consensus on substantial matters in legislation and public policy making can be painstaking. However, members of the House would rather take the consequences of prolonged duration in law deliberation and open debate on public policy making, than risk losing its rights to exercise democracy. The House is fully committed to be the guardian of democracy, and therefore seeks to strengthen the political system where political institutions can fully perform for the benefit of the whole society.

In line with that, decentralization of power through the implementation of regional autonomy is aimed at empowering regional governments to govern and develop our regions- especially remote areas- and to narrowing down economic and social gap between central and regional. Although critics on regional autonomy indicate that its implementation in some region is under performing due to the unpreparedness, or lack of leadership and capacity, as well as the shortage of sources,

however, the decentralization of power is meant to accelerate regional development that subsequently empowers local people to participate in their own regional development.

Distinguished Participants,

Parliament is also undergoing a capacity building process, whereby a plan to reform parliamentary mechanism has been undertaken. We need to increase and enhance parliamentary supporting resources of which a special committee on Parliamentary Capacity Development is being set up. Parliament needs to improve its outreach to invite more public participation in the public policy making process. Members of Parliament's relation with their constituents needs to be enhanced and facilitated. Oversight on government policies and government agencies still needs to be improved by having a better feed-back mechanism and better supporting agencies that enable members to focus their efforts and to perform well. In the fulfillment of our commitment as legislators to the enhancement of democracy, we implement internal control mechanism through the Committee of Conduct.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me also touch briefly on the question of the relationship between Islam and democracy. There are two largest political affiliations in Indonesia which I am sure you are aware of, the one that belongs to the nationalists and the other

being in more favor with Islam. But to draw a clear separate line between the two may lead to a wrong conclusion. The two political camps are more in an intertwined situation where some political parties that were founded by Moslem base organizations claim as equally nationalistic as being Islamist. Indonesia's being the largest Moslem community does not make it a 'theocracy' state, or advancing one certain religion to become state religion. The idea to the making of the Indonesian Nation and State is to embrace all, regardless of their social, cultural and political background.

Therefore, in the case of Indonesia, I think it is agreeable that Islam is compatible with the practice of democracy. There is a need to continue to develop and enhance the moderate, open and tolerant Indonesian Moslem Society, particularly when Islam has been made or perceived as being 'connected' to the global act of terror. Indonesia, like many other countries, has been victim to this act of violence, too, and that even encourages us to further our efforts to curb terrorism and violence.

Role of the Political Consultants

Democracy allows political system to reinvent and revitalize itself when its capacity and ability to accommodate new demand or aspiration is limited, whether it is due to bureaucracy stagnant or the failure of the system to perform. Political institutional enhancement marks the importance to

build a sound and effective political system. One can not imagine of a working democracy without a working system being in place. The empowerment of political institutions in the framework of system building is key to the enhancement of democracy. As we pass through rapid changes in almost all aspects, we experience greater and urging demand on political changes from time to time, and sometimes along the line politicians or party elites tend to engage in a short term activities or a mere practical mission, than to dwell on a long term vision or to contemplate on a more far-reaching party agenda.

This situation can be applied to any political institutions beyond political parties. Therefore political consultancy or political assistant in my view, will be more in demand to enable public policy makers improving their performance, and given the professionalism and objectivity of the nature of consultancy in the planning, programming and in the implementation of public policies, political consultants nonetheless is part of public policy makers. My hope is, the organization of political consultants will confirm its role to the guardian of democracy, especially in the new growing democracy, for we all agree that once democracy prevails and takes its root to grow, we can not afford to slip back into a non-democratic system

To conclude my speech, I would like to convey my thanks to you all for presenting the people of Indonesia the **Democracy Award**. In my view, the Award in some way also

represents the international community's appreciation and acknowledgement, extended to all the people of Indonesia and their leaders, for their struggle in developing and nurturing democracy that is suitable to the Indonesian context. It is very flattering for all Indonesians to be recognized as the fourth largest democracy in the world, while on the other hand there is a great task and challenge ahead to bring the whole society into prosperity through democracy. I would also like to take this opportunity to humbly invite assistance, advice and feed back from your community, helping us to enhance our performance in the mission to make democracy a success in Indonesia.

Thank you very much, I wish you a successful conference and meaningful outcomes that will contribute positively to the enhancement of democracy in all parts of the world. I hereby officially pronounce the closing of the conference, my best wishes to you all and hope to meet with you again.

Agung Laksono
Speaker of the Indonesian House of Representatives