



**THE EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA  
COPENHAGEN**

No. : **100** /Pen/II/06

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia presents its compliments to the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, all Diplomatic Missions and International Organizations accredited to the Kingdom of Denmark and has the honour to send the Embassy's Press Release No. *01/PR/III/06* which contains REMARKS BY H.E. DR. N. HASSAN WIRAJUDA, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA AT A DINNER WITH PARTICIPANTS TO THE ASIA RELIGIOUS LEADERS FORUM "REMEMBERING CHENG HO 600 YEARS AGO: COOPERATION FOR PEACE AND PROSPERITY" held in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 14 February 2006.

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, all Diplomatic Missions and International Organizations accredited to the Kingdom of Denmark the assurances of its highest consideration.

Copenhagen, 15 February 2006



**The Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs,  
all Diplomatic Missions and  
International Organizations accredited to the Kingdom of Denmark  
Copenhagen**



# **PRESS RELEASE**

THE EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

Ørehøj Alle 1, 2900 Hellerup, Copenhagen; Phone : +45 39624422; Fax: (+45) 39624483

No. : 01/PR/II/2006; Date : 15 February 2006

**Remarks by  
H.E. Dr. N. Hassan Wirajuda  
Minister for Foreign Affairs Republic of Indonesia**

**At a Dinner with Participants to The East Asia Religious Leaders  
Forum "Remembering Cheng Ho 600 Years Ago:  
Cooperation for Peace and Prosperity"**

**Jakarta, 14 Feb 2006**

Prof. Dr. Din Syamsudin,  
Mr. Lieus Sungkharisma,  
Distinguished Participants to this Important Forum,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first extend a warm welcome to the distinguished religious leaders from East Asia region who have joined us here in the spirit of dialogue and humanity.

I wish also to commend the idea of this forum paying tribute to the achievements of the great explorer, Admiral Cheng Ho of China. Six centuries ago, without the conveniences of high-technology navigation, he sailed far and wide, visiting some 35 countries of Asia and Africa, not in a bid for conquest or projection of military power, but in the spirit of trade, friendship and learning.

As a Muslim, he must have known of the saying attributed to the Prophet: "Seek ye knowledge even unto China." Since Admiral Cheng Ho was already in China, he gave new meaning to that saying by sailing out to places barely known to his people and bringing back with him not only precious items of trade and amazing specimens but also a body of new knowledge that enriched his nation.

What we need today is the spirit that drove Cheng Ho to seek knowledge of places far away from the land of his birth, the spirit of intellectual adventure. A wondrous variety of human civilizations, all capable of enriching one another, lies before us to explore. We cannot be parochial in the face of that vast plurality unless we want to wallow in ignorance and prejudice.

Today we live in a world where we cannot prosper unless we make others prosperous. We cannot be secure unless we make others feel secure. And we cannot justify pride in ourselves unless we give others the dignity that is due to their humanity.

These are the simple truths that the entire human race should learn and take to heart in order to ensure its long-term survival. But judging from the main course of current events, a large part of the human race is taking us a long time to learn them.

As a result, all over the world there are conflicts large and small, unresolved disputes and simmering tensions—all stemming from ignorance, parochialism and narrow-mindedness that have pitted nations, tribes, ethnic groups and faith-based communities against each other.

We in Indonesia did not have to look too far for the beginning of a solution. Since ancient times we have understood that disputes and differences of views between groups and between individuals can be amicably settled through dialogue.

We call this process "*musyawarah untuk mufakat*," consultation toward consensus. That is how over the decades, in spite of the immense variety of our ethnic cultures and traditions, we have managed to keep our common sense of nationhood intact and vigorous.

Inspired by our own tradition of mutual consultation at the communal level, the Government of Indonesia has taken a series of initiatives at interfaith dialogue as a way of stemming the spread of prejudice and ignorance. We have also aimed at promoting mutual knowledge, understanding and appreciation and eventually cooperation among the faiths.

With the Government of Australia, the Government of Indonesia in cooperation with the Muhammadiyah hosted an interfaith dialogue in Yogyakarta in December 2004 bringing together 136 religious leaders from 13 countries in the Asia-Pacific region to thresh out practical measures that governments and communities can take to improve social conditions and promote harmony and development at the grassroots level.

In the course of that dialogue, it was decided that interfaith dialogues will become a regular biennial activity in the region. The second interfaith dialogue will be held in Cebu, Philippines next month.

In July last year, Indonesia hosted the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) interfaith dialogue in Bali. In September last year, Indonesia held bilateral interfaith dialogues with Australia and the Vatican. At the end of this month, Indonesia will have a bilateral interfaith dialogue with the Netherlands in The Hague.

A constant objective in all these undertakings is the empowerment of the moderates in all the societies represented. And let me emphasize that when I speak of moderates, I don't mean those who do not hold strong views. Nor do I mean fence sitters who are waiting to be goaded to one side of an issue or the other.

By moderates I mean those who adhere to the golden mean. They can see clearly that virtue lies between two vicious extremes. In the light of the challenges confronting us today, one extreme is an attitude of hopeless apathy and the other is a tendency to impulsive violence.

Between these two vices lies the realm of virtue—where reason and compassion for others prevail. It is in that enlightened area of human affairs that our moderates have chosen to make a stand.

The moderates constitute the overwhelming majority not only among Muslims, not only in Indonesia but also among all adherents of all religions in everywhere in the world. That is why it is so important that as we promote dialogue among faiths and civilizations, we also find ways and means of empowering the moderates in the societies represented.

The ascendancy of moderates in public affairs is something devoutly to be wished—for they can become a major force for peace and progress. At the people-to-people level, they can serve as the most effective promoters of friendship and constructive cooperation among states and nations. And they can be society's most durable defence against outbreaks of violent extremism.

In recent days, with the raging controversy over the publication of cartoons of the Prophet in European publications, we have seen two of the most dangerous kinds of extremism at work on the world stage.

One kind of extremism asserts that freedom of expression can be recklessly applied without any sense of responsibility, without regard to its dire impact on the sensitivities of others. The other holds that unbridled violence is the only acceptable response to an insult. Both positions are outrageous.

And as both sides of the controversy stick to their kind of extremism, the forces that want a clash of civilizations, whatever may be their ultimate sinister agenda, are having a field day.

All of us who stand for moderation and for the empowerment of the moderates of the world must respond to this enlarged challenge of extremism. We must expand and intensify the process of dialogue that we have so auspiciously begun. And we must go beyond dialogue into action—for action is what the situation now calls for.

And it is important that such action must be carried out at the grassroots level for that is where the spirit of moderation must stop the spiral of hatred and prejudice that is being fomented by extremists.

This kind of positive action is now already being carried out in a number of places. In the Philippines, for example, a nation-wide Catholic-based organization leads a multireligious effort to provide housing for the destitute, including a good number of Muslim families.

In Aceh, several faith-based NGOs are working together to help tsunami victims rebuild their communities and to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives.

Through such undertakings, the representatives of faiths involved in the dialogue of civilizations can make a significant contribution to development. At the same time, they demonstrate the efficacy of moderates of all faiths when they are empowered and are given an opportunity to work together for the common good.

I look forward to the launching of more interfaith undertakings for progress at the community level, especially when the Yogya International Centre for Religious and Cultural Cooperation, which is being established in Yogyakarta, becomes fully operational later this year. The organizational framework of the center is now being designed and its programmes are being drawn up by the institutions concerned.

The interfaith dialogue that we are promoting and the envisioned interfaith undertakings are a worthy parallel to the feats of daring that Admiral Cheng Ho carried out six hundred years ago. As he explored lands beyond the seas, we shall explore the vastness of human plurality.

I have the finest anticipation for the truths that we will discover as we venture deeper into interfaith dialogue and cooperation. And I am sure it will prove that people all over the world, whatever may be their faith and culture, are amazing and wonderful and worthy of our trust and admiration.

It will affirm the essential kinship of all of us human beings.

I thank you.