

**REMARKS BY THE AMBASSADOR OF INDONESIA
AT THE IEDUL FITRI RECEPTION
22 SEPTEMBER 2010**

*Bismillahi-rahman-rahim,
Assalammu'alaikum Warahmatullah Wabarakatuh,*

Honoured guests,
Distinguished colleagues and friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first of all welcome you most warmly this evening. We are greatly honoured for your presence in this reception.

As you know, one of the most important celebration in the Islamic calendar is Eid ul-Fitr. *Eid* is an Arabic word meaning "festivity", while *Fitr* means "conclusion of the fast"; and so the holiday celebrates the conclusion of the thirty days of dawn-to-sunset fasting during the entire month of Ramadan.

In Indonesia, as well as in other parts of the Islamic world, there are many ways for the Muslims to express their joy and happiness related to the end of Ramadan.

We in Indonesia use the word "Lebaran" to refer to Eid ul-Fitr. We seize the opportunity of Lebaran to refresh our ties of kinship and our ties of close social relations by visiting our parents, relatives, friends and loved ones in our respective home-towns and villages. Therefore, Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, and other big cities in the country look almost empty during a week-long Eid ul-Fitr holiday as most of their inhabitants do what is called "pulang kampung" (or home-coming).

It is the tradition among many Muslims in Indonesia to make the most of our Lebaran. Our fasting and other good deeds during Ramadan would not be complete without the willingness to forget and forgive the past wrongs committed among ourselves. Therefore, Eid ul-Fitr provides us with the unique opportunity for restoring a strong social bond by asking and giving forgiveness within our families, neighbours and friends.

Let me therefore take this opportunity to convey "Selamat Lebaran" or "Eid Mubarak" to all of you and let me also wish that the auspicious occasion of Eid ul-Fitr bring peace, joy and happiness to all of us. *Insyah Allah.*

Distinguished colleagues and friends,

The Indonesian Embassy values highly its close working relations with many friends in the UK be they from the diplomatic community, the Parliament, government agencies, business circles and other friends including the Muslim community in Britain.

As an entity representing Indonesia, the Embassy has a strong commitment to promote mutually beneficial cooperation between Indonesia and the UK in all areas. Our priorities are trade, tourism, investments, and education cooperation.

I believe that this is an occasion to recognize that our engagement with the Muslim community in the UK has contributed a lot to strengthened bilateral relations between Indonesia and the UK.

By way of sharing some brief information, the last several years have witnessed some projects and joint activities involving the Embassy and many friends in the Muslim community.

- An Indonesian-UK Islamic Advisory Group has been established in 2006 and has ever since actively brought together Islamic representatives from both countries to advise on countering radicalism and promoting mutual understanding and tolerance between Islam and the West.
- An exchange of Imams and religious scholars has also been conducted as well as the twinning of mainstream and religious schools and many other programmes for capacity building in interfaith dialogue.
- During the fifth *World Islamic Economic Forum* on "Global Food and Energy Security" held in Jakarta in March 2009, we are thankful for the large participation of British Muslim community leaders and businessmen.
- The Embassy has actively organized events for promoting trade and investment cooperation including in the areas of Islamic

finance and banking. We are grateful for the support rendered by the business circle in London in general including those representing the Muslim community.

- We also sincerely appreciate the act of generosity as well as the provisions of humanitarian assistance for the victims of natural disasters in Indonesia by the British government and its people including those by *Muslim Aid* and *Islamic Relief*.

The facts I mentioned above are just some of the examples where the cooperative engagement between the Embassy and the British Muslim community have contributed to the overall goal of promoting closer bilateral relations between Indonesia and Britain.

Let me also take this opportunity to sincerely extend my heartfelt appreciation to those organizations and individuals, the FCO included, for their assistances which are useful for bolstering common understanding and harmony between civilisations through the facilitations of the production of specific media programmes about Islam in Indonesia, visits by Indonesian Parliamentarians to meet their counterparts in the UK as well as other useful exchanges involving the youth, the women and religious leaders.

Distinguished colleagues and friends,

I don't intend to make a long speech.

It suffices to say that Indonesia being the largest Muslim nation in the world is committed to promote world peace through better understanding between Islam and the West.

My country is a living proof that Islam, democracy and modernity could go hand-in-hand in harmony.

Therefore the Embassy will continue to set up relevant programmes and activities to promote interfaith dialogues, intercultural understanding, exchange of experience in de-radicalization programmes as well as those relevant with promoting trade, tourism, investments and education cooperation.

In concluding, let me therefore request your kind support and cooperation in this endeavour.

Let us now enjoy our reception and it is my sincere hope that we will renew our friendship and personal rapport.

Thank you.

Wassalammu'alaikum warahmatullah wabarokatuh.