



**Speech by the Ambassador of Indonesia
H.E. Yuri Octavian Thamrin**

**on the occasion of
25th Anniversary of the Establishment of Bilateral Relations between
the Republic of Indonesia and Ireland**

**Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin
12 November 2009**

Your Excellency, Micheal Martin (NB right spelling, pronounced as 'Mihol'), Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland;
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the whole Indonesian community in Ireland I wish you all *Selamat Datang!* -- meaning a very warm welcome in Bahasa Indonesia (or Indonesian language). Indeed I am very glad to meet all of you this evening on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of full bilateral relations between Indonesia and Ireland, two friendly nations with an ancient heritage.

Let me also take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to Minister Martin for accepting our invitation to be this evening's Guest of Honour.

I sincerely hope that this gathering will enhance the mutual friendship between Indonesia and Ireland and will also lead to closer personal ties among us all. You can be assured when you visit my country of an Indonesian *Cead Mille Failte* (*baca: caid milye falce --- A hundred thousands welcomes*).

As we gather here this evening in this solemn moment, allow me to tell you a bit more about Indonesia, its history and culture and share with you some of major recent developments in my country. In so doing, I

wish that you can better appreciate Indonesia as well as better understand the hopes and aspirations of our citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We all know that Ireland is known as the 'Emerald Isle' because of its greenness, but you may not know that Indonesia as the largest archipelagic nation in the world is known as the 'string of emeralds' along the equator and all our more than 17,000 islands are lush green and rich in biodiversity.

We are also a multiethnic nation with around 300 ethnic groups and no less than 700 languages and dialects, which have all left their imprint in our long history. When St Kevin and his monks founded and built their monastery in Glendalough (*baca: Glendaloch*) making it a centre of learning in Medieval Europe, Buddhist and Hindu kingdoms and dynasties in Java founded and built the Borobudur and Prambanan temples, making the island a centre of Buddhist and Hindu learning in South East Asia.

Later Muslim traders from Arabia and also from Gujarat in India came and over centuries introduced Islam in Indonesia. Today Indonesia is not only the largest Moslem nation, but also the world's third largest democracy. Indonesia respects and cherishes our diversity in religions and traditions and we consider our socio-cultural pluralism more as the source of our strength and also as the source of our rich national heritage.

You know yourself in Ireland that it is not always easy to balance the rights and aspirations of the majority with that of the minorities, but it is the only way to achieve meaningful democracy. I am not saying that Indonesia is perfect, there is still a lot that can be done, but we have made enormous strides and Indonesia should therefore not be judged by the old yardstick of the past.

Indonesia, like Ireland has been on a journey of change since 1998, *reformasi* we call it, bringing us not only presidential and parliamentary democracy, but also peace in regions such as Aceh in Northern tip of Sumatra and in Ambon and Poso in the Eastern part of my country. But

like Ireland, Indonesia also strongly believes in the integrity of its national territory and it will strongly defend its national rights against those who wish to partition parts of our national territory.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In 2009 the Republic of Indonesia has again showed its credentials as a mature democracy by holding a whole series of elections along the length and breadth of Indonesia, just like in 2004 which were peaceful, fair and transparent, first in April with national parliamentary as well local and regional elections, followed by the election by direct ballots for the President and Vice President in July.

Representative democracy has become firmly established as the political means through which Indonesians pass judgment on the performance of their government, solve their political differences and mandate their President and National Parliament to lead the country judiciously along the line of people's aspiration for the next term of five years.

In its edition of 18 September the *Economist* published a special report on Indonesia which I believe contained a balanced assessment of the progress made by Indonesia as well as the challenges my country still faces.

Indonesia as the world's largest Moslem majority country is a living proof that Islam, democracy and modernity can go hand-in-hand and work together in harmony. But certainly we cannot allow ourselves to be complacent and our President Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono knows that he and his new Government can and must do more and better.

Their first priority is to deal with the fall out of global 'credit crunch'. Obviously no country is immune from the severe impact of the global economic slowdown. Our world is interdependent and the pain of economic downturn is collectively felt, although its severity may not be the same from one country to the next.

Indonesia, like the other Southeast Asian 'Tiger Economies', suffered enormously from the financial crisis in 1997-98, but because of the

lessons learned ever since it is estimated by the World Bank that our economy will still grow by 4.3% this year.

For 2010 Indonesia aims to bolster further its domestic consumption as well as to develop our external trade which reached US\$ 132 billion in 2008, representing 25% of our GDP which is US\$ 530 billion, and last but not least to improve its competitiveness and its attractiveness for more foreign direct investment.

In light of the current global economic downturn, I am confident that Ireland's 'Celtic Tiger' will regain its strength and I hope that the Irish Tiger will explore how it can work together with the Indonesian Tiger to grow economically stronger to the benefit of both nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

For the past 25 years our bilateral relations have grown steadily, but I strongly believe that we still have ample room to take our relations to a higher plane. Indeed the time has arrived to enhance this relationship to a further stage of closer cooperation on the global stage and bilaterally, politically, culturally, economically and in business.

We further believe that the democratic platform as well as our shared democratic ideals and values provide us with a strong foundation for our bilateral ties as well as for the common goal of promoting international peace and security and democracy and also in dealing with urgent international challenges such as countering the threat of terrorism and protecting the global environment.

Our relationship should progress in all aspects: from good relations on government to government level, to closer relations on parliamentary level, business level, academic and cultural levels, and last but not least on people to people level.

At this reception, we wish to present a sample of Indonesian culture in the forms of the Pendet dance from Bali, the Saman dance from Aceh, the Japong dance from Jakarta as well as the Rampak Gendang (or traditional drum performance) from West Java.

Let me also take this opportunity to kindly invite you all to come to Indonesia and experience at first hand our natural beauty, our rich culture, our delicious foods, our tropical climate and the friendliness of Indonesian people.

In concluding, let me once again express my personal gratitude and that of my Government and Embassy for your presence here tonight.

Please join me in a toast to honour the following:

- For Indonesia, “May our beloved country continue to progress in the path of modernity, democracy and well-being”;
- For Ireland, as our host country, “May Ireland continue with its prosperity and success”;
- For all of us present here tonight, “I wish you the best of health, luck and more success in whatever noble endeavour you make”.

Slainte ('*baca: Slance*' / Cheers) and Thank you.