



REMARKS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ASEAN-IPR

Fourth Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Conference on Mediation: Experiences and Prospects – Session Four: The Way Forward in Mediation

Jeddah, 5-6 June 2022

Excellencies,
Distinguished Speakers & Participants,
Ladies & Gentlemen,

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim,
Assalamualaikum Wr. Wb.

1. I would like to thank and pay tribute to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, for inviting the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (ASEAN-IPR) to this distinguished forum and for excellent arrangement of this Conference and generous hospitality rendered to us.
2. The ASEAN-IPR's first encounter with the OIC was back in 2017, during the UN's "Biennial Regional Organisations' Meeting on Mediation" – then hosted by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Djibouti. Therefore, we are happy to reconnect with the OIC.
3. We are truly honoured to be part of this Fourth OIC Conference on Mediation. As a relatively new institution, we look forward to connecting, engaging, and more importantly – learning – from the experience and expertise of everyone here.
4. I am also so grateful that today I am in the same panel with Dr. Sultan Barakat, whom I have recognized his name since 1999, when he started the work of peace mediation for Aceh together with Mr. Martin

Griffith of the Henry Dunant Centre (now the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue) based in Geneva.

5. Dr. Barakat opened a corridor for dialogue between the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement – whose endeavours and work I have proudly taken part in continuing, until the two sides reached a Peace Agreement in August 2005 in Helsinki, facilitated by former President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari, the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2008.

6. I am humbled for the opportunity to share the work as well as experiences of the ASEAN-IPR, on peacebuilding and peace processes. Our work is in progress.

ASEAN-IPR: mandate, functions & work

7. Let me first give you a glimpse overview regarding the ASEAN-IPR as a regional platform to discuss candidly some issues related to stability and peace of the region.

8. The ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation – or ASEAN-IPR – was established to further consolidate the Community building process by **strengthening research activities on peace, conflict management and conflict resolution**.

9. The ASEAN-IPR is also **mandated** to be ASEAN's institution for research activities on peace, conflict resolution, reconciliation, and post-conflict peacebuilding.

10. The Institute's establishment is grounded on the notion of **positive peace** – which highlights the importance of sustainable investment in development and institutions, as well as societal attitudes to cultivate a culture of peace. This is reflected in our motto: **Forging and Fostering Peace**. Thus, peace building is at the very core of our work – particularly in advancing and promoting culture of peace.

11. In addition to research, the Institute also undertakes other functions including: **capacity building**-that promotes understanding and knowledge on peace building and peace processes for stakeholders which includes the advancement of work around moderation and interfaith dialogue; **pool of expertise and support for ASEAN Bodies**, which aims to gather experts from the region on peace processes (including mediators, facilitators, peace advocates, scholars/lecturers), who may provide policy recommendations and/or assist ASEAN Bodies on activities and initiatives related to peace, reconciliation, conflict management and conflict resolution – including facilitation for peace

negotiation; function as a **knowledge hub by establishing networks** with relevant and like-minded institutions with objectives aimed at promoting culture of peace; and lastly, the Institute also functions to **disseminate information** on best practices, lessons learned and relevant information to Member States.

Preventive Diplomacy

12. For almost 55 years, ASEAN has been an indispensable factor in contributing to peace and stability in Southeast Asia. In such period, ASEAN has initiated various platforms for dialogue in larger atmosphere.

13. Through the ASEAN Region Forum for example, ASEAN endeavours to contribute to the discourse of preventive diplomacy.

14. Amongst such contribution is to address measures of preventive diplomacy that includes confidence building efforts, norms building, and enhancing channels of communications.

15. Together with China Foreign Affairs University, we will publish a book on preventive diplomacy entitled: **Sustaining Peace in ASEAN and the Asia-Pacific: Preventive Diplomacy Measures**.

16. Sustaining peace is a systematic political process that involves a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention, mediation, conflict management and resolution, as well as peace building.

Early Warning Capabilities

17. ASEAN has been able to maintain relative peace in the region. However, it is not devoid of conflict risks which could be prevented through early warning capabilities.

18. The discussion we had on “**Early Warning Capabilities: Effective Conflict Prevention**”, underlined the urgency to exchange insights and experiences from within and outside the region at the regional, national, and local levels.

19. The discussion also set out possible avenues for ASEAN’s development of early warning capabilities and highlighted the importance for ASEAN to use and maximise its own existing tools, forums and/or mechanisms to engage with external partners.

Women, Peace and Security (WPS)

20. Promoting women’s effective participation in conflict mediation and addressing their specific needs in peace-making efforts is a high focus for ASEAN-IPR.

21. The WPS Agenda has been one of the priority areas of ASEAN-IPR’s work for the last decade to undertake studies to promote gender mainstreaming in peace processes.

22. The activities taken among others: workshop on **Strengthening Women’s Participation in Peace Processes**; **Symposium on the Plight of Women and Children in Conflict Situations**; and **ASEAN Women Interfaith Dialogue** to promote Understanding for an Inclusive and Peaceful Society.

23. The ASEAN-IPR Discussion Series has become one of the Institute’s flagship projects. It is the Institute’s online webinars organised to gather expertise and discuss current trends related to peace processes with resource persons from various institutions.

24. We have twice tackled the topic on women and peace. The first with the theme **Women, Peace, and Security & COVID-19** in 2020 and the second with the theme **Cross Sectoral Initiatives to Advance the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda in ASEAN** in 2021. Both sessions highlighted the role of women in peacebuilding, conflict resolution and the specific challenges they faced during the pandemic, as well as discussing the possibility of cross-sectoral collaboration to advance WPS agenda in the region.

25. We are also currently in the process of developing a training programme on WPS, aimed at mid- to senior-level ASEAN government officials.

26. The launch of the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry (AWPR) in 2018 is the first embodiment of the Institute’s function to establish a pool of experts, and the Institute’s contribution to realising the 2017 ASEAN Leaders’ “Joint Statement on Promoting the Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN”.

27. Furthermore, the establishment of AWPR marks an invaluable step towards addressing the issue of gender mainstreaming in peace processes, as well to implement capacity-building for women as peacebuilders and promote a more gendered approach to peace and conflict in the region.

28. Gender dynamics provide unique opportunities and challenges at the same time for peace-making and need to be comprehended, analysed, and used for strategic advantage.

Youth, Peace and Security (YPS)

29. In 2018, ASEAN-IPR convened **Youth Conference on Peace and Tolerance** with the theme of ‘**Building Unity and Common Understanding to Counter Intolerance and Violent Extremism**’ – gathering youths from across the region and generating the ASEAN Youth Declaration on Peace and Tolerance and Plan of Action to implement the declaration.

30. Last year, one of the sessions of our Discussion Series took the theme **Youths as Agent of Peace: Utilising Digital Platforms for Narratives of Peace**.

31. The session was an introduction to our youth-oriented project: ‘**Youth-Tech: Utilising Technology as an Instrument of Peace**’, where youth in the region were encouraged to utilise Information and Communications Technology (ICT), including the digital platform, to promote and amplify peace narratives in their own community.

32. This year, on the commemoration of the ASEAN-IPR’s first decade, we have planned activities focusing and aimed towards the youth and their role as agent of peace.

33. We plan to partner with youth organisation from the region, for activities that would appeal to the youth while instilling values of peacebuilding and culture of peace as well as to tap into the potential and resources of the young people in Southeast Asia as contributors, in addition to being beneficiaries, of peacebuilding.

Preventing and Countering Radicalism and Violent Extremism.

34. Southeast Asia as a region has certainly not been immune, and has had its fair share of experience, to threats of radicalism, violent extremism, and terrorism.

35. Under the ASEAN Plan of Action to Prevent and Counter the Rise of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism, one of the priority areas identifies the need to “*empower youth and enhance their capacity to prevent the rise of radicalisation and violent extremism*”. It is therefore in our best

interest to engage them to prevent and resolve current challenges on issues of radicalism and extremism.

36. The ASEAN-IPR also acknowledges the social media has been used to spread messages of hate and fear, causing unrest and distrust. For this reason, information and communication technology should be harnessed to support efforts in peace-making and peacebuilding, as contrary to using it as a force to create dissent.

37. Identifying the dangers of disinformation, the ASEAN-IPR will organise an online workshop on addressing disinformation as a means to prevent conflict and promote messages of peace. It also aims to enhance and modernise the traditional mediation process and efforts on conflict prevention.

38. As the ground basis of mediation, dialogue among diverse communities of Southeast Asian countries is significantly important. However, interreligious and intercultural tolerance in every level of community can only be achieved if the authorities are also equipped with such capabilities and knowledge in engaging with diverse communities in the region.

39. With that in mind, together with the **King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID)** we will convene an unprecedented training for ASEAN Officials on Interreligious Dialogue.

40. Participants in the training, coming from every ASEAN Member States, will be able to acquire a deeper understanding and knowledge of interreligious and intercultural dialogue where they learn techniques and approaches so that they will be able to use for conflict mediation as well as in policy strategy to prevent conflict.

41. This has become the first time KAICIID has worked on a training programme with a Southeast Asian regional organisation and has opened possibilities of further collaboration, as the two institutions found common grounds on countering hate speech, youth and women empowerment.

Way Forward in Mediation

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

42. Let me now address the way forward in mediation. Taking into considerations of the outcomes of our exchanges and discussions with various partners, we identify some pertinent elements on mediation to

share. Some of them have been addressed by speakers of the previous sessions.

43. We believe that if we do not guide the peace process, conflict will re-occur. Certainly, peace process is not just about signing a peace agreement. Peace is not a one stop process. This includes also to prepare the unexpected. Peace process is so complex. No one size fits all model of peace processes. No caricature of simplification. Perfection can be the enemy of the good.

44. The role of regional organisation like the OIC and ASEAN, are not only managing major power relation, but also increasing their capacity to solve problems.

45. The Covid-19 pandemic, I think is a wake-up call. How we can get major powers, middle powers and small powers to work together in facing the current transnational security challenges.

46. This current disruptive world order poses both uncertainties and risks. Peace should be earned and nurtured, which now even become more important. The ASEAN-IPR is determined to forge and foster peace in the region.

47. It is believed that “what human started, human can end”. All conflicts can be resolved, although taking different time span.

48. We share the view that peace cannot be imposed by force. Over reliance on military solution can have detrimental effects.

49. An inclusive dialogue can create conditions for sustainable peace. Solution to the conflicts ideally shall be owned by local people and tailored to their needs.

50. External actors can only complement and support the process. Lasting peace takes time and requires coordinated efforts by those who are involved. It takes two to tango. There are no quick wins in today’s conflict, as the nature of conflict is changing, power is shifting, and challenges are multiple. Peace certainly is a process, not an event.

51. Adaptive Peace is also to be considered to coping with the complexity of the issues and the unpredictability, considering dignity, solidarity, humility, and partnership compact.

52. Peace is not a linear process. It needs a strong commitment from actors involved and respect reciprocity from different actors. It is all about trust and relationship. Trust is crucial in diplomacy.

53. Mediation should touch upon those complexity and the root causes by listening voices and grievances those affected by conflict. How to bring

people together and talk to each other. What incentives to be granted for conflicting parties to sit together.

54. Hopefully, there will be an avenue in the future for those actors to meet in informal setting to share their experiences. Human touch is paramount in peace mediation as we deal with human beings as emotional animals. Human relation makes a huge different.

55. In conclusion, as said “It is not enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it is not enough to believe in it, one must work at it.”

56. Peace is always a work in progress. We need patience and perseverance. Let calibrates our time.

57. I thank you again for the opportunity to share our work at the ASEAN-IPR and for your kind attention.

Wassalamu’alaikum Wr. Wb.
