

## **A New Road For Indonesia And The United States**

Richard G. Lugar, Washington D.C

The Indonesia-US relationship continues to strengthen. It received an important boost when President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono proposed in 2008 a Comprehensive Partnership between the two countries.

In 2009, Secretary of State Clinton and Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda announced agreement to implement the proposal.

We must not let this and other successes in our bilateral relations be overshadowed by the latest postponement of President Obama's much-anticipated trip to Indonesia. While there is understandable disappointment in Indonesia, neither White House scheduling problems nor the subsequent glee emanating from a few anti-American pockets in Indonesia should detract from a growing relationship.

Both sides are working hard to enhance ties. President Yudhoyono and other Indonesia leaders are implementing ambitious strategies to strengthen the rule of law, combat corruption, implement the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, improve human rights, and reform Indonesian Military (TNI) and the Indonesian Army's Special Forces (Kopassus).

Some naysayers in Indonesia are trying to discourage President Yudhoyono from moving ahead in these areas, suggesting they represent Western ideas and thinking.

However, these measures are in Indonesia's own self-interest. History shows that when implemented, such proposals will develop stronger foundations for the long-term success of democracy while attracting more visitors, investment and economic commitment for Indonesia. This translates into jobs for the people of Indonesia, a cause to which the President is fully committed.

In January of 2005, he said, "I know economic plans generally have pros and cons. For my part, I would like to think that my economic vision based on the Triple Track Strategy has three pros: pro-growth, pro-employment and pro-poor".

In that spirit, I would encourage Indonesian officials to establish a formal mechanism for stakeholder consultation prior to publishing any

regulation that may impact the ability of investors to do business in Indonesia, a step that will facilitate greater foreign investment.

President Obama and Secretary Clinton have built on the previous administration's efforts at strengthening ties by reaffirming the US commitment to Indonesia and the region.

During President Bush's 2003 trip to Indonesia, he announced a five-year, US\$157 million "Basic Education Initiative", to improve educational quality.

That amount and more was spent on basic education needs with additional funding dedicated to the transfer of responsibility for the implementation of the school-based management approach to district and provincial governments and to facilitate its nationwide replication.

Close cooperation in education is a fundamental element of the US-Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership. At the G20 in Toronto, President Obama and President Yudhoyono announced a Higher Education Partnership in which the United States will commit to help build Indonesian capacity to provide world-class university education, and to help realize the aspiration to double within five years the number of American and Indonesian students who study in each other's country.

On the security front, officials of the US Department of Defense and Indonesia's Ministry of Defense recently signed a framework defense agreement in areas of security dialogue, education and training, procurement of military equipment, maritime security and other mutually agreed areas of cooperation.

The recent announcement of the joint deep-sea exploration by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Indonesia's Ministry for Marine Affairs and Fisheries and the Agency for the Assessment and Application of Technology is an important example of the variety of possibilities for cooperation between the two countries.

If the Comprehensive Partnership is sufficiently structured to survive the political tests of time in both countries, it will facilitate an unprecedented level of bilateral cooperation that will pay long-term benefits to the people of Indonesia and the United States.

*The writer is the Republican leader of the Foreign Relations Committee and a member and former chairman of the Agriculture, Nutrition and*

*Forestry Committee.* (The Jakarta Post, Tuesday, July 6, 2010)