

**Indonesia – Singapore Forum
Celebrating 50 Years of Indonesia-Singapore Relations
8 December 2017, Singapore**

**Opening Remarks by Singapore Co-Chair
Mr Tan Chin Tiong, Director
ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute**

Ambassador I Gede Ngurah Swajaya , Ambassador Soemadi, Professor Tommy Koh, Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure this morning to welcome all of you to this forum to celebrate 50 years of Indonesia-Singapore bi-lateral relations. I want to thank all of you for your participation, and especially our Indonesian participants who have taken the trouble to join us from various parts of Indonesia.

Our bi-lateral relations are wide ranging, from linkages in business/trade, investments, education, culture, tourism, security and defence. In addition, our political leaders regularly exchange visits at state and provincial levels, which shows the high level of collaboration, trust and understanding developed over 50 years of bi-lateral relations.

This Forum today culminates the series of commemorative activities we have had since the beginning of this year. In fact, it was Professor Tommy Koh who more than a year ago, suggested organising such a Forum as an event to celebrate our 50th Anniversary. I want to thank him for that.

While most of the earlier events to commemorate our 50th Anniversary involved high level interactions by various political office holders or officials from both sides, the Indonesia-Singapore Forum is uniquely pitched at the grassroots and ground level, addressing problems faced by common people and aspiring youth.

Three different but inter-related subjects under the broad themes of “Liveable and Smart Cities”, “Seizing Opportunities in the Creative Economy Era, and “Enhancing People-to-People Connectivity”, will be discussed by different panels today.

They are very relevant to current and future challenges facing Indonesia, Singapore and other Southeast Asian cities and countries.

Over the past decades, sustained economic development has led to rapid urbanisation in many Southeast Asia countries, challenging urban planners to address issues of congestion and overcrowding, efficient and adequate public transportation, and a balance between social/recreational and functional needs in urban centres. In this context, can “smart cities” provide clues or solutions to some of these problems? Here, Indonesia with many mega urban centres and Singapore as a city state, can share experiences of our respective approaches to these problems.

Secondly, how to strengthen creative economic sectors in the digital era, where communications and technology pre-dominate and will be more complex is another subject of discussion today.

Thirdly, looking into the future, people-to-people ties are important, especially among youths. Both Indonesia and Singapore can find innovative ways to expand or remodel existing immersion programmes and strengthen exchanges for literature, culture and arts. Relationship at the grassroots level can be enhanced and in the process, help bring bi-lateral relations to higher levels.

The panel members for this forum include up and coming politicians, academics, entrepreneurs, talented artists, and prominent activists. All are either successful individuals who have excelled in their own fields of endeavour, successful business start-ups, experts in entrepreneurship and innovation strategy, or dedicated activists in the youth or people sector. They are role models for all of us, common characteristic they share is of courage to do things differently and overcoming adversity to achieve even greater success. Among the 60 participants each from both countries, we also have academics, journalists, entrepreneurs and students to discuss and explore new ideas and opportunities for networking between different groups of people across Indonesia and Singapore.

I would like to conclude by taking this opportunity to thank our Forum counterpart, the Policy Assessment and Development Agency (BPPK) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia for co-organising this event with us. I would also like to express our gratitude to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Singapore (MFA) and the Indonesian Embassy in Singapore (KBRI) for supporting this Forum. Ambassador I Gede Ngurah Swajaya and his staff have been very helpful to the organisers to bring about this Forum and I want to acknowledge them for this contribution.

I look forward to a very good discussion today.