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Promoting and Ensuring Political Participation and Representation across the Regions

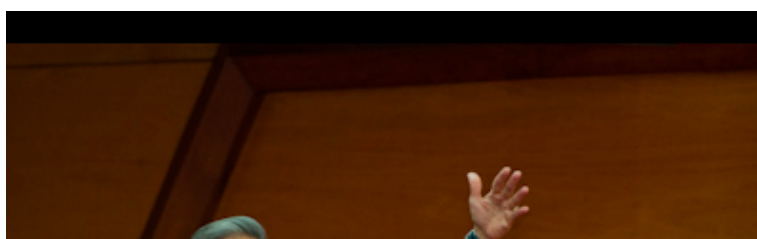
Jakarta , 2 May 2012

It was the highlight of the Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy, and the event at the ASEAN Secretariat fulfilled its promise of thought-provoking discussions, with interesting illustrations and arguments.

Hosted by H.E. Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, Secretary-General of ASEAN, the event kicked off with a welcome dinner for the representatives of the various regional organisations on 30 May 2012. The gathering was an illustrious line-up of who's who.



Guests included M. Ahmed Saleem, Secretary-General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Ambassador John E. Aggrey, Political and Diplomatic Advisor to the Chairperson of the African Union, Mr. Jean Claude Thérbaud, Director-General of the Bureau of European Policy Advisers, Ms. Lorraine Kershaw, International Legal Adviser, representing the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), Mr. Vidar Helgesen, Secretary-General of International IDEA, and Dr. Nabil al-Arabi the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States (LAS).





“We hope that the Second Meeting of the Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy can contribute to a better understanding about promoting wider participation, and our roles in promoting it,” said Dr. Surin.

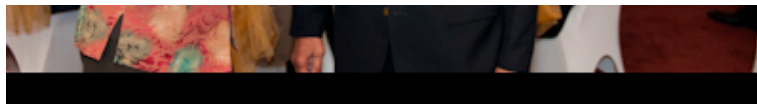
In his welcoming remarks, the Chairman of the Countries Permanent Representatives, Ambassador Khan Pharid of Cambodia also introduced the first speaker - former Philippine President Fidel Ramos - as one of the great personalities in ASEAN.



“There are four core beliefs that should guide us to achieve good governance, which are: to have a national ambition to promote inclusiveness, raise the moral standards in government and society beyond the rule of law to achieve good governance, change the flawed character of political systems, and leadership by example,” said Mr Pharid.

“We are gathered here in the spirit of democracy in which we must engage, continue discussion, and stay in touch,” said Mr Ramos, who also highlighted the historic importance and achievement of the reform in the Philippines.





“Although still far from ideal, around 40 million people in the Philippines have voted in the last election,” he said, adding that everyone has to help tackle challenges such as corruption, extravagance, cronyism, irresponsibility, and incompetence in the respective national societies.



Right after Mr Ramos’ luncheon address, came the second highlight of the event - the ASEAN Secretariat Policy Forum that featured an opening reflection by Professor Kishore Mahbubani, the Dean of Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore.

Facilitated by Dr Surin, the forum discussed and highlighted issues in line with its theme of “Promoting and Ensuring Inclusive Political Participation and Representation among Our Regions.”

The discussions and sharing of experiences respond to the recent global developments. They highlight the roles that Regional Organisations can play in promoting participation and representation for women, minorities, and the disenfranchised. The forum was open to the Jakarta-based diplomatic community and other guests from the region, representatives from international and Regional Organisations, think-tanks, and the media.