



17th TALKING ASEAN

Embracing ASEAN Community: Youth Perspective

BINUS International University, Jakarta
December 16, 2014

INTRODUCTION

Jakarta – On Tuesday, 16 December 2014, The Habibie Center held a Grand Launching for its ASEAN Studies Program website (www.thcasean.org) and Talking ASEAN dialogue entitled **“Embracing ASEAN Community: Youth Perspective”**. Beginning with the website grand launching, the event heard opening remarks from Dr. Firdaus Alamsyah (Executive Dean of Binus International) and Ms. Rahimah Abdulrahim (Executive Director of The Habibie Center), followed by a keynote speech by Ms. Helen Fazey (Regional Councillor of the British Embassy Jakarta) on behalf of HE Amb. Moazzam Malik (British Ambassador to Indonesia, Timor-Leste and ASEAN). Ms. Elaine Tan (Executive Director of the ASEAN Foundation) was also present for the closing remarks. Meanwhile the Talking ASEAN discussion itself featured Rama Yudo Wirawan (Diplomat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia), A. Ibrahim Almuttaqi (Coordinator of the ASEAN Studies Program, The Habibie Center), Wafa Taftazani (Deputy Manager, Corporate, and Investment Banking, Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ), and Vita Alwina Daravonsky Busyra (Lecturer, London School of Public Relations).

The objectives of this Talking ASEAN were to elaborate the perspective from various experts to: (a) share the views, ideas, and experiences of Indonesian young professionals in facing the ASEAN Economic Community 2015; (b) identify challenges and opportunities for young people in Southeast Asia through the ASEAN Economic Community; (c) generate optimism among young people in facing ASEAN Economic Community 2015.

This discussion report summarizes the key points of each speaker as well as the question and answer session that followed.

WELCOMING REMARKS

— Dr. Firdaus Alamsyah —



Dr. Firdaus Alamsyah (Executive Dean of Binus International)

Dr. Firdaus Alamsyah opened his remarks by welcoming all of the participants, especially those from the British Embassy, The Habibie Center and the ASEAN Foundation to Binus International University. He explained the importance of ASEAN not merely to Indonesia, but also to Binus International University noting that ASEAN played a significant role and therefore Binus has made the decision to include ASEAN studies as part of its curriculum.

In the context of youth, ASEAN's population needed youth in order to grow especially in the era of changing geoeconomics. Besides, Dr. Alamsyah further argued that the youth would also have better employment opportunities either from or to other countries in ASEAN. Dr. Alamsyah afterwards underlined the importance of research for ASEAN. He mentioned The Habibie Center as an advance institution for research and opened the opportunity for research collaboration.

Lastly, he closed his remarks by stating that Binus International University wanted to have more students from ASEAN member states. He concluded by expressing his belief in the role of ASEAN as a center of global growth and that Indonesia could take its place to contribute significantly in this growth.

“In the context of youth, ASEAN’s population needs youth in order to grow especially in the era of changing geoeconomics.”

-Dr. Firdaus Alamsyah-

OPENING REMARKS

— Rahimah Abdulrahim —



Ms. Rahimah Abdulrahim (The Habibie Center Executive Director)

Ms. Rahimah Abdulrahim opened her speech by mentioning and greeting all the speakers. In particular she highlighted partners of The Habibie Center who had help support the development of the ASEAN Studies Program. She went on to narrate the background of The Habibie Center's ASEAN Studies Program which had developed into an important research institute with its various research and other activities. She outlined that this edition of Talking ASEAN was conducted with the specific aim of reaching all stakeholders and entities in order to strengthen the realization of the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015. She also mentioned Binus International University as the first campus in which The Habibie Center's ASEAN Studies Program had decided to bring its Talking ASEAN dialogue and informed the audience that The Habibie Center intended to carry future events in other universities in Indonesia so as to better reach young people. Lastly Ms. Rahimah invited all participants to engage in a discussion as well as expressed her hope that The Habibie Center could open networks with more partners, particularly with students.

To conclude, Ms. Rahimah called on Binus International University students to contribute to The Habibie Center's ASEAN Studies Program website by writing and making videos that could generate optimism for the ASEAN Community 2015.

“This edition of Talking ASEAN was conducted with the specific aim of reaching all stakeholders and entities in order to strengthen the realization of the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015.”

-Rahimah Abdulrahim-

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Helen Fazey



Helen Fazey (Regional Counsellor British Embassy Jakarta)

Ms. Helen Fazey spoke on behalf of HE Amb. Moazzam Malik (British Ambassador to Indonesia, Timor-Leste and ASEAN). She opened her speech by congratulating The Habibie Center’s ASEAN Studies Program for launching its brand new website.

Ms. Fazey went on to ask the audience how many had travelled to other ASEAN countries, or were aware of the ASEAN Community 2015. She expressed her belief that the ASEAN Community would be an important milestone for ASEAN in achieving regional integration. Coming from the United Kingdom, which was a member-state of the European Union, she described that the ideas of a people-centered ASEAN was important and that it was crucial for it to positively contribute to society, particularly for the young people as citizens of ASEAN. She stressed that

it was with this in mind that the British Embassy supported ASEAN’s regional integration and move towards a people-centered community.

In the context of youth, Ms. Fazey told the audience that it was critical for young people to give and share their aspirations for the region as well as to respect the aspirations of others. Therefore, she felt that the new website of The Habibie Center’s ASEAN Studies Program could be used as an instrument for young people to share their ideas and aspirations. Ms. Fazey also applauded the impact of The Habibie Center’s work to the community, especially through its Talking ASEAN dialogues and various other research publications. In this regards, the website could be used also to expand The Habibie Center approach for accommodating youth perspectives and aspirations.

She concluded her speech by inviting everyone to visit the website and help contribute to the successful realization of the ASEAN Community 2015 and beyond.

“The ideas of a people-centered ASEAN is important and it is crucial for it to positively contribute to society, particularly for the young people as citizens of ASEAN.”

-Helen Fazey-

SPEAKERS' PRESENTATION

— Mr. A Ibrahim Almuttaqi —



Mr. A Ibrahim Almuttaqi
(Coordinator of ASEAN Studies Program, The Habibie Center)

Mr. A Ibrahim Almuttaqi opened his presentation, “Embracing ASEAN Community: Youth Perspective” by stating his belief that the idea of ‘embracing’ was important because it implied willingly and/or openly accepting the ASEAN Community rather than only mentioning the ASEAN Community without truly embracing it. He further argued that this idea of embracing ASEAN community was different from the typical criticism of ASEAN which traditionally was seen as elite-driven oriented and operated in a top-down manner.

Mr. Almuttaqi raised the notion that the idea of embracing the ASEAN Community was also related to increasing the public awareness and knowledge about ASEAN. Here he argued that the level of awareness and knowledge of ASEAN was both low and poor among the general public. Citing a 2007 study by the ASEAN Foundation regarding the awareness and attitudes of 200 students in the region towards ASEAN, he pointed out that the study showed positive attitudes toward ASEAN and most of them considered themselves as ‘citizens’ of ASEAN. Despite the optimism of this study, Mr. Almuttaqi argued that there were some areas of concern which signalled a more negative message toward ASEAN. Based on the same studies, he mentioned that 51.6% of respondents argued that “if ASEAN did not exist, it would make no difference to my life” and that respondents from the ASEAN-6 countries (Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand) saw ASEAN as ‘old news’ or even boring history.

Mr. Almuttaqi went on to raise an issues of young people living in border areas where the ASEAN Community will have the biggest impact on the lives of people. He called for an updated survey targeting young people in border areas such as between Entikong – Tebedu (Indonesia-Malaysia), Wang Kelian – Wan Prachan (Malaysia – Thailand), and Maesot-Myawaddy (Thailand – Myanmar). He further pointed out that substantive knowledge of ASEAN was lacking questioning how many Indonesians were able to speak another ASEAN language.

Mr. Almuttaqi highlighted several fears and worries of Indonesians towards the ASEAN Community. He noted how an Indonesian Minister had asked for a delay in implementing the ASEAN Community due to fears that the country was not ready. He also cited the speech of Indonesian President Joko Widodo at the ASEAN Summit in which it was stated that Indonesia should not simply become a market for other ASEAN countries. With regards to young people, Mr. Almuttaqi mentioned the fears and worries related to job availability. He questioned whether Indonesians would be able to compete with others in the region once the ASEAN Community came into force, highlighting research which showed that the Indonesian workforce was dominated by low-skill and low-education.

Focusing on young people, Mr. Almuttaqi explained that the 60% of the total ASEAN population comprised of youths aged 15-29 years old. As such young people would have an important role to play in the ASEAN Community not only as subjects but more importantly as actors.

Mr. Almuttaqi finalized his presentation by concluding that there needed to be greater ASEAN awareness. He called on people to learn more, know more, and talk more about ASEAN. Noting that knowledge was power, he called on young people to take ownership of the ASEAN Community by first being knowledgeable on it.

“60% of the total ASEAN population comprised of youths aged 15-29 years old. As such young people will have an important role.”

-Mr. A Ibrahim Almuttaqi-

SPEAKERS' PRESENTATION

— Ms. Vita Alwina Daravonsky Busyra —



Ms. Vita Alwina Daravonsky Busyra (Lecturer, London School of Public Relations)

Ms. Vita Alwina Busyra shared her personal thoughts on the media, youth and education and the ways they could contribute to the ASEAN Community 2015. She highlighted that the year of 2015 will be very critical as the 10 member states of ASEAN would be integrated as a regional community. She further added that the ASEAN Community should provide a region where people lived in peace that was outward looking-oriented, stable; and bounded in a caring society that can enhance cooperation as agreed by the ASEAN member states leaders. Ms. Busyra argued that many young generations do not know much about the ASEAN Community, particularly about the ideals that had been agreed by ASEAN leaders.

Ms. Vita Busyra went on by describing Indonesia's profile in ASEAN. She explained that as the biggest geographical area in Southeast Asia with 40% of total land and almost 40% of the total ASEAN population, Indonesia plays a significant role in determining the future of ASEAN. She continued with her argument that without Indonesia, ASEAN will lose its credibility and also lose its political bargaining power as a region.

Ms. Vita Busyra underlined the importance of media and communication in realizing the ASEAN Community. She noted that media and communication significantly impacted globalization but nevertheless pointed out that there was no practical evidence that the media of ASEAN countries reported enough news to prepare the people about the ASEAN Community. Comparing the coverage of Indonesian media on the ASEAN Community with

others in the region, Ms. Vita Busyra revealed that the media in Lao PDR did report and publish column articles on the ASEAN Community.

Conversely, according to Ms. Vita Busyra's personal thoughts, Indonesia did not have a special publication or report that published stories about the ASEAN Community. In this sense, she indicated that Indonesia's media did not realize enough the importance of the ASEAN Community for Indonesia and the region in general. Moreover, most of Indonesian media focused too much on local and national news rather than regional issues in ASEAN. She argued that if Indonesia's media covered other stories in other ASEAN countries, Indonesian readers can be motivated to compete with other countries.

Ms. Vita Busyra further noted the important role of youth, in particular as the part of development agenda. She stressed that Indonesian youth consisted of 62 million of the total population and should be included in the integration process of ASEAN Community because of three reasons. First of all, she argued that youth are the future leaders and will hold responsibilities. Second, youth can make influential and powerful contributions to the government for negotiation. Third, she added that in particular with the ASEAN socio-cultural pillars, youth in ASEAN can contribute to exchanging ideas, views, as well as languages that can build a shared understanding between youth in ASEAN member states.

As her final comments, she hoped that there will be an intensification of joint research and lecturers among universities, cultural exchange, and also a forum for cooperation of institutions that can unite and communicate youth in ASEAN.

“Indonesia’s media do not realize enough the importance of the ASEAN Community for Indonesia and the region in general.”

-Ms. Vita Alwina Daravonsky Busyra-

SPEAKERS' PRESENTATION

— Mr. Wafa Taftanzani



Mr. Wafa Taftanzani (Deputy Manager, Corporate, and Investment Banking, Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ)

Mr. Wafa Taftanzani discussed his experience as a youth in ASEAN and also the perspective of the banking sector in ASEAN. He entitled his presentation, “An ASEAN Story”. He stressed that ASEAN was established to produce good things. Mr. Taftanzani explained how originally he had negative feelings towards the ASEAN Community but had since changed his mind after working in the banking sector in ASEAN.

Mr. Taftanzani elaborated three notion based on the banking perspective that were related to the ASEAN Community and business in the region. First, he mentioned about the financing for cooperation. Second, he mentioned about advisory that will contribute to gaining access for capital market in the region while at the same time minimizing the risk. Third, he noted about sales and trading in the region, such as commodities, bonds, or stocks. He pointed out that ASEAN now had a lot of potential to integrate the stock market where the regulations were established. For instance, it will produce a regional value chain where there are markets in Indonesia, sales and marketing office in Singapore, treasury center in Philippines and/or even the

factories in Thailand. In simple terms, ASEAN needed to make their regulations easier for investment and also production.

In his presentation, Mr. Taftanzani mentioned about the scholarship opportunities for youth in ASEAN. In regard with this region, youth in ASEAN should consider that simplification of scholarship opportunities were the same as investment in youth given the consideration that the scholarship recipients will be future top leaders or stakeholders. He also underlined the inequality issues in ASEAN, sharing his story about travelling to ASEAN countries which made him realize that the inequality gap in ASEAN was huge.

Even though there is a lot of inequality, Mr. Taftanzani argued that there would be opportunities for Indonesians, including infrastructure opportunities. Many ASEAN member states suffered from lack of infrastructure in the region which meant that ASEAN member states could have opportunities for cooperation and as the consequence, it will open a lot of job opportunities. He argued that many banks wanted to invest and lend their capital to ASEAN countries including to Indonesia. Based on this, Mr. Taftanzani stated that would also mean there will be growing market for Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR). To conclude his presentations, Mr. Taftanzani stated there are plenty of works to do in ASEAN but this signalled that ASEAN also provided a lot of opportunities for prosperity in the region.

“There are plenty of works to do in ASEAN but this also signals that ASEAN provides a lot of opportunities for prosperity in the region.”

-Mr. Wafa Taftanzani-

SPEAKERS' PRESENTATION

— Mr. Rama Yudo Wirawan



(center) Mr. Rama Yudo Wirawan (Diplomat at MoFA of the Republic of Indonesia)

Mr. Rama Yudo Wirawan started his presentation by highlighting a few stigmas about ASEAN. He pointed out that some of the negative sentiments about the ASEAN Community, particularly with the ASEAN Economic Community had been exaggerated. Second, he supported the argument that ASEAN brought a lot of opportunities. Third, he raised the issue on a people-driven ASEAN.

Regarding the first issue, Mr. Wirawan spotlighted a concern that was commonly heard among the public, “are we ready for the ASEAN Economic Community?” He pointed out that Indonesia in fact was having a trade balance deficit within the region. But the trade deficit with ASEAN trade partners was being compensated with increased production using the intermediate products coming from those ASEAN countries and boosting economic productivity and trade exports to other countries. Most of Indonesia’s import from ASEAN was either semi processed or raw product and these imports went back again in the national production process.

For the second issue, Mr. Wirawan argued that the ASEAN Community would not only cover trade and investment issues, but also brought with it other important impacts, such as in political and security stability, inbound tourism, student exchange, and also job availability in other ASEAN countries, via the Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRA) in ASEAN. He added by highlighting the considerable

opportunity for entrepreneurship in the other ASEAN countries.

For the last issue, Mr. Wirawan mentioned that in the future, ASEAN development would be more people-driven. He argued that although ASEAN would not look like the European Union, with establishing a European Parliament, he believed that ASEAN was developing its process based on its core principles stipulated in the ASEAN Charter. In order to expedite and strengthen the people-driven community, ASEAN would need their own citizens to explore their common identity and policy priorities to develop a truly integrated ASEAN understanding.

As a conclusion, Mr. Wirawan stressed the notion that ASEAN could bring a lot of opportunities although with some challenges as well. Based on those three arguments, Mr. Wirawan argued that ASEAN should be very optimistic and seized opportunities of the ASEAN Community. ASEAN needed their own citizens to explore their common identity and policy priorities to develop a truly integrated ASEAN.

“ASEAN needs their own citizens to explore their identity where they exchanged views that bring ASEAN citizens to a shared understanding.”

-Mr. Rama Yudo Wirawan-

Q&A SESSION



One of the audience raising questions and giving comments during Q&A session.

Comment No. 1:

Directed to Mr. Wafa Taftazani, the questions is what do you think about the prospect of Public Private Partnership (PPP) in the region?

Comment No. 2:

Directed to Mr. Rama Yudo Wirawan, is there any solution provided by the government in order to disseminate information effectively to know about the opportunities in other countries for Indonesian business?

Comment No.3

There are two questions. First question was directed to Mr. Rama Yudo Wirawan regarding to the contradictions of government officials about Indonesia's preparedness for ASEAN Community 2015, what do you think about it?

Second questions will be directed to all speakers, how will you perceive ASEAN 25 years from now?

Mr. Rama Yudo Wirawan

Replying to the first questions about disagreements among government officials with regards to Indonesia's preparedness for ASEAN Community 2015, Mr. Wirawan explained that the government is trying to solve the issue by having discussions with various stakeholders. He also added that it would be up to the new president to indicate the direction of the Indonesia's foreign policy objectives towards ASEAN. He also added that the government is pushing hard to disseminate information in terms of reach and speed. Having said that, Mr. Wirawan frankly stated that the government needs to cope with bureaucratic layers in its expenditure planning. As a short term solution, the Foreign Ministry is now trying to work with other ASEAN member states and dialogue partners to disseminate information on the ASEAN Community as well as the support of national stakeholders.

Mr. Wafa Taftazani

Mr. Wafa Taftazani answered the question about ASEAN in the next 25 years ahead. He predicted that there will have to be very good progress on socio-cultural pillars, particularly with people learning the different languages in the region. In the economic sphere, he argued that there will be steady growth and still possibilities to discuss a potential single currency and better job availability. In terms of political-security pillars, Mr. Taftazani forecasted that the issues of the South China Sea will hardly be resolved or at most show only little progress. He also underlined that military cooperation with China in the region will be very much expanded.

Mr. Wafa Taftazani also answered the second question related to Public-Private Partnership where he argued that more people becoming rich would be not a big problem as long as the poor also got richer. He revealed that the benefits of PPP will open employment opportunities for many.

Q&A SESSION

Ms. Vita Alwina Daravonsky Busyra

Ms. Vita Busyra explained that in the next 25 years, Indonesia will dominate ASEAN. According to several indicators such as the role and number of youth in the region, education and the role of media, it was likely that Indonesia will have very important position. She believed that Indonesian wanted to see a people-driven community in ASEAN and would contribute positively in ASEAN. She noted that the power of media will play an important part in ASEAN development in the future.

Mr. A Ibrahim Almuttaqi

Mr. A Ibrahim Almuttaqi did not wish to speculate on the future of ASEAN in 25 years' time but did point out that Indonesia's foreign policy in the near future seem to be more nationalistic and pragmatic. Based on Indonesia's history within the ASEAN region, he reminded the audience about Indonesia's tag as the "bad boy" given its Confrontation with Malaysia (and Singapore), military campaign to take back West Papua from the Dutch, annexation of East Timor and its withdrawal from the United Nations (during the 50s). He argued that ASEAN success will depend on how Indonesia act in the region and suggested that the success of ASEAN would only be realized if every ASEAN member-states stood as equals.



Mr. Wiryadiwena (left), Researcher of ASEAN Studies Program, The Habibie Center, moderates the Q&A session.

Ms. Vita Alwina Daravonsky Busyra

Ms. Vita Busyra agreed that the role of media can and should include youth participation in the region. Nevertheless, the most important actors that should be approached was the government in order to attract more young people to contribute to the ASEAN Community. She mentioned once more about the significance of youth awareness that will influence the future.

Mr. Rama Yudo Wirawan

Mr. Wirawan argued that the government was taking initiatives to disseminate information. He gave examples of how the government is now trying to approach students in schools, cooperate with Non-Government Organization as well as with the media. He believed that this is the pragmatic way to disseminate information more effectively and efficiently.

Comment No.4

For all the speakers, What do you think about the role of Civil Society Organization (CSO) that can promote the ASEAN Community to be more people-driven oriented? In particular, what do you think that CSO can use this media platform such as the website to promote the ASEAN Community 2015?

CLOSING REMARKS

Elaine Tan



Ms. Elaine Tan (Executive Director, The ASEAN Foundation)

In her closing remarks, Ms. Elaine Tan thanked The Habibie Center, Binus International University and the British Embassy. She argued that the ASEAN Community belongs to the young people and should not be seen as merely a people-oriented or people driven community. She further invited people and institutions, particular those with a focus in communications or media to work with the ASEAN Foundation in order to disseminate the issues related to the ASEAN Community. She also pointed out the ideas of connectivity in order to appreciate diversity and share understanding among each other.

“The ASEAN Community belongs to the young people.”

-Elaine Tan-





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