



Mr. President,

I am pleased to congratulate you on your election as President of the 59<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly. May I also pay tribute to your predecessor, H.E. Mr. Julian Robert Hunte of St. Lucia, for ably presiding over our deliberations during the previous General Assembly.

Even as I speak, a magnificent transformation is being completed on the other side of the globe—in my country. Many of us in Indonesia waited all our lives to witness this historic event: our people finally rising to take their destiny into their own hands.

Exactly a week ago, some 125 million men and women trooped to the polling stations and chose the President and Vice President who would govern in the name of 230 million Indonesians. This was the third national political exercise that we had to carry out—not just once but three times—in a period of six months, the previous two being the parliamentary election and the first round of the presidential election. All of them were peaceful, fair and democratic.

Each of them was an enormous operation covering some 6,000 islands in an archipelago with an expanse as wide as Europe, involving millions of election workers attending to some 575,000 polling stations.

As we coped with the massive logistical requirements of this undertaking, we were extended support and assistance by the United Nations and friendly countries. We are grateful for this.

It will be some time before the official results of the vote are in. But whoever will emerge as the new national leaders of Indonesia will have a clear and strong mandate from the people—not from the elite, not from the party bosses, nor from power brokers and vested interests—but from the people.

This is the climax of a transition from authoritarian rule to a full-fledged democracy, a process that began six years ago in the

crucible of the Asian crisis, which devastated our economy and mangled our sociopolitical system. We have thus become the full-fledged democracy that the Founding Fathers of our Republic have long ago envisioned.

This need for political reform is also felt by other nations. The Emir of Qatar, as Chairman of the G-77 told this Assembly last week, *"Political reform and the people's participation in decision-making are no longer an option but a necessity."*

Hence, we are proud of this democracy of ours. It is the fulfillment of a universal human aspiration, and yet it is unique to us. It sprang from our native soil, a true child of our culture. It was not imposed from outside, at gunpoint.

And it put to rest the debate on whether Islam and democracy can ever mix.

As the country with the largest Muslim population, Indonesia has proven that Islam can be a bastion of democracy and social justice. Indeed, our deep sense of spirituality inspired our people to resoundingly reject money politics, corruption, terrorism and all forms of extremism. It was also our beacon toward reform.

And reform has worked for us. Although the Asian crisis instantly doubled the number of Indonesians living below the poverty line, we have since been able to reduce the poverty rate to its pre-crisis level. We did this by shifting from a government-driven poverty-reduction strategy to one of community empowerment. The effort required a funding of more than US\$1 billion, making it one of the largest such programmes in the world.

Through fiscal controls that dramatically lowered inflation, we stabilized prices of essential goods. Through social safety net programmes, we helped the poor weather the crisis. By doing this, we denied the terrorists what could have been a dangerous mass base.

Since then, consumer confidence has led our economic growth. With political fears allayed and investor confidence boosted, we look forward to growth of 4.8 percent this year, 5.5 percent next year. We can now wage a stronger battle against poverty.

Consolidating our efforts to promote the rule of law, greater respect for human rights and effective regional autonomy as the main pillars of our reform, we are confident that we can overcome threats to our national unity and security-including communal violence, separatism and terrorism.

We continue to strengthen our relations with all our neighbours. We have made a fresh start with Timor Leste and we are building a strong relationship. We look forward to a future of bilateral peace, friendship and cooperation.

This does not mean that we have solved all our problems. We still have to make democracy work for us some more and to keep it working. This is what 230 million Indonesians devoutly wish, and they deserve no less than this.

Hence, we must empower the UN to serve as the effective tool of multilateralism that it has always been meant to be. We must reform the Security Council by making it more democratic in terms of procedure and representation in order to reflect today's geopolitical realities.

In this regard, it may be recalled that Australia last year proposed the inclusion of Indonesia as a permanent member on the Council. We appreciate Australia's position. It has greatly encouraged us.

As the world's third largest pluralistic democracy, the fourth most populous country, the world's largest Muslim nation, a country of tremendous cultural diversity and a member with a track record of serving in various peace initiatives of the UN, Indonesia has an important global constituency on the Council.

Indonesia has served in more than 30 peacekeeping missions, starting with the very first—in the Middle East in 1957. Today, Indonesian soldiers and military observers are deployed

is not to deny that terrorists are still capable of wreaking havoc on our societies. Just two weeks ago, they struck again in the heart of Jakarta, killing nine innocent civilians and wounding 150 others.

We in Indonesia condemn this act of inhuman savagery, mourn the loss of innocent lives, and share the pain and anger of the wounded and the bereaved families. But we are by no means intimidated. We will bring the perpetrators to justice as we have always done after every terrorist attack.

And our faith remains firm that the fight against terror can be won. The world can be made immensely safer. But the global coalition to defeat terrorism must be inclusive. It must be multilateral and democratic. It must empower the moderates of the world.

And it must address the root causes of terrorism: the grievances and the poignant sense of injustice that drive human beings to such depths of despair, they would carry out the most heinous acts of mass murder and destruction.

It must address grievances due to poverty that is the offshoot of social and economic inequities, the affronts of tyranny and corruption, and the failure of states to deliver a standard of living that befits human dignity. They include grievances due to political oppression, such as the aggression and brutalities that the Palestinian people continue to suffer in the hands of the occupying power.

For the coalition that would fight terrorism and poverty to be truly multilateral and democratic, it must include the regional organizations, which have been envisioned in the UN Charter as the pillars of global multilateralism.

The UN itself, in extending assistance and services to countries all over the world, needs support at the regional level. That is why we in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are striving to develop a robust partnership with the World Organization.

We are confident that this partnership will prosper, as ASEAN evolves into a true Community by 2020. As a Security Community, we will assume full responsibility for our security and political stability. As an Economic and Sociocultural Community, we will be a stronger force for development and social integration of the Asia-Pacific region.

Together with our counterparts in two continents, we are building a bridge of cooperation across the Indian Ocean to form a partnership for development. A Summit of Asian and African nations will formally establish this strategic partnership in April 2005.

At the same time, the Summit will pay tribute to a watershed event in the cause of equitable international relations. Thus, we will observe the Golden Jubilee of the Asian-African Conference held in Bandung in 1955.

Moreover, ASEAN is networking in all directions: with its counterparts in the rest of the Asia-Pacific, in Latin America and in Europe. We do envision that this network of regional organizations, in partnership with the UN, will be the ultimate form of multilateralism.

That network can also help advance a global democratic agenda. To this, Asia can make a significant contribution. For today Asia is certainly in the midst of a democratic flowering.

The series of successful democratic elections in various Asian countries in recent months has been hailed worldwide as a political miracle that may be of deeper significance than the short-lived Asian economic miracle a decade ago.

But democracy is never a miracle. Never a gift nor something imposed. It is always hard earned, often the fruit of many sacrifices. And its ultimate worth depends entirely upon us the people—whether we have the political maturity, the wisdom and the courage to make it work and make it endure.

To that end, we in Indonesia are devoutly committed.