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THE SECOND AND THIRD BILATERAL INTERFAITH DIALOGUE SERBIA–INDONESIA (2013, 2015)

The Second Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue Serbia–Indonesia (22-25 October 2013, Jakarta)

The state-religious delegation of the Republic of Serbia paid an official visit to the Republic of Indonesia from 22 to 25 October 2013 for taking part in the Second Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia.

This is the most important state-religious delegation in the history of the Republic of Serbia, next to the one established in April 2011 for the First Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue with Indonesia.

Indonesia, which holds interfaith dialogues with over thirty countries, appraised that the First Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue with Serbia (held in 2011) was the best one ever held with any country thus far.

The initiator of both interfaith dialogues with Indonesia was the Ambassador of Indonesia to Serbia – H.E. Mr Samuel Samson.

The interfaith dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia is of special importance having in mind that Indonesia is the biggest Muslim country in the world with which the official Belgrade has had very cordial relations for over sixty years.

At an international level Indonesia has been providing strong support to the Republic of Serbia regarding the preservation of territorial integrity of our country in the southern Serbian province, Kosovo and Metohija.

In 2013, for the first time in the history of Serbia and Yugoslavia, state officials and all the religious heads of our country travelled together in the first official visit to a foreign country – Indonesia: His Holiness Irinej, Serbian Patriarch and head of the religious part of the delegation; Dr Mileta Radojević, Director of the Office for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities and head of the state part of the delegation; Dr Dragan Novaković, Deputy Director of the Office for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities; Monsignor Stanislav Hočevar, Archbishop of Belgrade, Roman Catholic Church in Serbia; Adem effendi Zilkić, Reis-ul-Ulema of the Islamic Community of Serbia; Isak Asiel, Rabbi of the Jewish Community in Serbia; Muhamed effendi Jusufspahić, Serbian Mufti and Belgrade Imam, Deputy of Reis-ul-Ulema of the Islamic Community of Serbia; Professor Dr Dragomir Sando, Vice Dean at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade; Dr Aleksandar Raković, Coordinator of the Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue

of Serbia and Indonesia and Chairman of the Association of Serbian-Indonesian Friendship “Nusantara”; Archdeacon Radomir Rakić, Editor-in-Chief of the Information Service of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The state-religious delegation of the Republic of Serbia arrived to Jakarta on 22 October 2013 where H.E. Jovan Jovanović, the Ambassador of Serbia to Indonesia, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia and Orthodox faithful from Jakarta welcomed it, at the Soekarno-Hatta international airport.

The Jakarta Post, an influential English-language daily which reports of diplomatic corps activities, reported of the arrival of Serbian state-religious delegation referring to as to “historic visit”, since it was the first time that an Orthodox Patriarch paid visit to Indonesia.

The official meetings of two countries representatives started on 23 October 2013. Our delegation was received by Agnug Laksono, Coordinating Minister for People’s Welfare, who pointed out that the friendly relations of Indonesia and Serbia had been historical, that the two countries were linked by ethnic and cultural variety and that we had been “close brothers” since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Belgrade and Jakarta, i.e. Yugoslavia and Indonesia.

His Holiness Serbian Patriarch Irinej also underlined historical friendship between the two countries and added that all of us were honoured to have the opportunity to further nourish and strengthen our relations with Indonesia. The Patriarch also stated that the relations between the traditional Churches and religious communities in Serbia were friendly ones and that international cooperation was giving fruitful results.

Dr Mileta Radojević, Director of the Office for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities conveyed cordial regards from Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić to the President of Indonesia Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, with the message that he “highly appreciates and will never forget the support Indonesia has been giving to the vital interest of Serbia – the preservation of Serbian territorial integrity and non-recognition of Kosovo’s independence”.

Thereto Minister Laksono responded that Indonesia was consistent in its standpoint that it would not recognise “the self-proclaimed Kosovo independence”.

Thereupon, the interfaith conference started, the topic being religious and cultural differences. Indonesia established state-religious delegation which included – apart from the officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Religious Affairs – university professors of Muslim, Protestant, Roman Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian and Orthodox faiths.

The conference was opened by Abdurrahman Fachir, Director General for Information and Public Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. After him spoke Dr Bachrul Hayat, Secretary General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. They were followed by speeches by Professor Dr H. Amin Abdullah, Special Staff of Minister for Religious Affairs; Archimandrite Daniel Byantoro on the behalf of the Orthodox Church community in Indonesia; Professor Dr.

Franz Magnis-Suseno, Jesuite priest and senior lecturer at the Driyarkara School of Philosophy Jakarta; Dr Chandra Setiawan, Presidium Coordinator of Matakini (Supreme Council for the Confucian Religion in Indonesia) and Protestant priest Dr Joas Adiprasetya who heads Theological Seminary in Jakarta.

On our side, introductory word was given by Dr Mileta Radojević. All members of Serbian delegation spoke on the conference: officials of the Republic of Serbia, Serbian Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church in Serbia, Islamic Community in Serbia and Jewish Community in Serbia. Thus we can point out that the Second Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia was the gathering of all big world religions. What followed was the exchange of experiences regarding interfaith coexistence and harmonious relations in two countries and individual presentations interspersed by the exchange of opinions and interesting questions.

The state-religious delegation of the Republic of Serbia then visited the Orthodox Church Community in Jakarta. There are approximately 20.000 Orthodox Indonesians in Sumatra, Java and Bali. And the number has been increasing every year.

The next day, on 24 October 2013, our state-religious delegation visited the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University. The delegation was welcomed by the Rector, Professor Dr Komaruddin Hidayat who recalled every day of visit to Belgrade in 2011, during the First Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia, when he was the member of the state-religious delegation. Mr Hidayat underlined that the University he was managing was the prime institution of high education in Indonesia with approximately 22.000 students attending lectures at ten faculties.

On behalf of our delegation, Dr Mileta Radojević responded and expressed his satisfaction for the interfaith dialogue as a good guide for deepening cooperation between our two states.

Then the Ambassador of Indonesia to Serbia – H.E. Semuel Samson and the Ambassador of Serbia to Indonesia – H.E. Jovan Jovanović addressed the students, as well as the Rector Komaruddin Hidayat. They were talking about deepening of historical relations between Belgrade and Jakarta through interfaith dialogue as one of highways towards success. The Ambassador Samson said that the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia could be held between students.

Thereupon, the members of the Serbian delegation delivered lectures at the State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatulla; first Professor Dr Dragomir Sando, Vice Dean for Science of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade; then Belgrade Mufti Muhamed Jusufspahić; and finally Chairman of the Association of Serbian-Indonesian Friendship “Nusantara“ Dr Aleksandar Raković, Coordinator of both inter-religious dialogues of two countries. All three lecturers were speaking of Serbian experiences in developing harmonious interfaith life.

The state-religious delegation of our country also visited an Islamic organisation Muhammadiyah which is in charge of primary, secondary and tertiary education in Indonesia. Dr Sudibyo Markus, Senior Advisor in Muhammadiyah stated that the

organisation operated 133 faculties and had a developed cooperation throughout the world.

Serbian Patriarch Irinej pointed out in Muhammadiyah how proud Serbia was of its friendship with Indonesia. His Holiness noticed that “warm smiles of Indonesians show the gist of their natural disposal“. The Patriarch informed the hosts that in 2013 rights of Christians in Kosovo and Metohija had been jeopardised, which is why the Patriarch thanked Indonesia for “not recognising violent separation of a part of Serbia – Kosovo and Metohija, the cradle of history, culture and spirituality of the Serbian people“.

The eventful day for our delegation was completed by the Mass served by Belgrade Archbishop Stanislav Hočevar in the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Jakarta. Monsignor Hočevar was received by the Archbishop of Jakarta Ignatius Suharyo Hardjoatmodjo.

The Serbian delegation then visited Baznas, a state organisation dealing with social issues of Muslims. The guests were received by the Secretary General Muhammad Fuad Nassar, who presented the activities of this organisation. Mr Nassar was interested in the way the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Islamic Community of Serbia deal with social issues. Patriarch Irinej and Mufti Muhamed Jusufspahić elaborated on the topic. The Patriarch underlined especially difficult position of Orthodox clergy in Kosovo and Metohija, while Mufti Jusufspahić pointed out that the self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo Albanians was a political issue, and not a religious one.

On the fourth day of the visit to Indonesia (25 October 2013) Serbian state-religious delegation visited Istiqlal Mosque and Roman Catholic Cathedral in Jakarta. Thereupon Reis-ul-Ulama Adem Zilkić and Mufti Muhamed Jusufspahić prayed Salat-al-Jumah.

Our state-religious delegation was then received by Dr Marzuki Alie, Speaker of the People’s Representative Council within the People’s Consultative Assembly of Indonesia. After welcoming speech he pointed out that Indonesian Assembly delegation visited Serbia in June 2013 and that he was happy to have been received at the highest state level in such a friendly manner. Speaking of religious issues, Alie reminded that according to the Constitution every Indonesian has the right to freely choose his/her faith. He especially underlined that annually all Churches and religious communities record increase of the faithful.

Patriarch Irinej told to Dr Alie that our delegation had great pleasure to visit “lovely blessed country Indonesia and its people“. He stressed that Indonesia had “harmony amongst religions and peoples“. He made a comparison with the Edict of Milan which was “so ideally applied“ in Indonesia, so that everyone could from the depths from one’s heart profess one’s faith, build temples and preach one’s teaching. The Patriarch concluded that Indonesia thus gave example to the entire world and that religious harmony in that country is “pleasing to God and people.“ His Holiness thanked Indonesia “for sending such a wonderful Ambassador – H.E. Samuel Samson – to Serbia.“

Dr Mileta Radojević, Director of the Office for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities, stressed out that friendship of our two countries established over 50 years ago did not fail, but was getting stronger. The Director also conveyed gratitude sent by the President of the Republic of Serbia – Tomislav Nikolić – to Indonesia for principled standpoint regarding the preservation of the territorial integrity of Serbia. He also conveyed friendly message sent by the Prime Minister of Serbia – Ivica Dačić – that Serbia could be an important link for cooperation of Indonesia with European countries. Radojević gave to Marzuki Alie a letter from Serbian President Tomislav Nikolić to the President of Indonesia Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

Then the delegation visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia where it was received by the Deputy Minister, Dr Vardana. He said that generally the greatest success in an interfaith dialogue is achieved through dialogue. Vardana added that he hoped the interfaith dialogue between Serbia and Indonesia would be continued and would give concrete results.

Patriarch Irinej continued saying that interfaith relations in Serbia were harmonious as shown in the state-religious delegation members. The Patriarch repeated that harmonious relations did not exist in Kosovo and Metohija where Albanians had unilaterally proclaimed independence. His Holiness thanked Indonesia again for not recognising self-proclaimed Albanian secession of Kosovo and Metohija – which is our holy territory with over 1.500 churches and monasteries, the greatest shrines of the Serbian people, amongst which there is also the see of the Serbian Patriarch – the Patriarchate of Peć.

The state-religious delegation of Serbia then visited the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia – Nahdlatul Ulama. The leader of this organisation Said Aqil Siradj said that Islam respects very much Christian faith as it comes from the same source. Siradj added that Nahdlatul regarded Islam as “good, civil and modern faith” and that it acted as intermediary in settling religious disputes in the country, adding that when religious conflicts did happen – it usually turned out to be misuse of the situation for political reasons.

Patriarch Irinej agreed that religious conflicts emerged when politicians misused religious issues.

The final word to this visit to Nahdlatul Ulama was given by Reis-ul-Ulema of the Islamic Community of Serbia – Adem Zilkić. He said that over 45 national communities lived in “our Fatherland Serbia”, as well as 7 traditional Churches and religious communities. Reis elaborated that the Islamic Community acted like a traditional one and that it was completely equal with other Churches and religious communities which have that status in general. He added that the faithful of the Islamic Community in Serbia belonged to 7 nationalities, “which means that we have overcome the national way of organisation”, and pointed out that “interfaith relations in Serbia have never been better”. Finally, Reis-ul-Ulema Adem Zilkić said that “after unilateral proclamation of independence of Kosovo, Muslim faithful turned out to be

on two sides of a border which has been established by violence“. He was adamant that “Kosovo problems are not of religious but of national nature“ and said to the friends from Indonesia to “be careful and not to succumb to unilaterally proclaimed independence of Kosovo“. As a Muslim, Reis asked representatives of the Nahdlatul Ulama to support their Government to be consistent in its standpoint regarding the Kosovo issue so that “our faithful would not live on two sides of the border“.

The Rabbi of the Jewish Community in Serbia, Isak Asiel, met with the professors of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences of the University of Indonesia: Dr Chusnul Mar’iyah and Dr Dave Lumenta so as to initiate cooperation of our countries in the fields of ethnology and anthropology. This meeting marked the end of our state-religious delegation visit to Indonesia.

The state-religious delegations of Serbia and Indonesia concluded that the dialogue was very successful and that it should be continued. The dialogue of the two countries was covered by media both in Serbia and in Indonesia, and it resounded in several Asian countries. Indonesia accepted the proposal that the interfaith dialogue of our countries would take place biannually.

The Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue Serbia–Indonesia (8-13 November 2015, Belgrade)

The Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia was held from 8 to 13 November 2015. That was the occasion for the two friendly countries to debate at the highest state-religious level about religious topics relating to state bodies, Churches and religious communities.

For the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia our country made a delegation consisting of: Minister of Justice of the Republic of Serbia Nikola Selaković, His Holiness Serbian Patriarch Irinej, Head of the Administration for Cooperation with Churches and Religious Communities – Dr Mileta Radojević, Bishop of Bačka of the Serbian Orthodox Church Professor Dr Irinej Bulović, Reis-ul-Ulema of the Islamic Community of Serbia Adem Zilkić, Belgrade Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church Stanislav Hočevar, Rabbi of the Jewish Community in Serbia Isak Asiel, Mufti of the Islamic Community of Serbia Muhamed Jusufspahić, Bishop of Raška-Prizren of the Serbian Orthodox Church Teodosije Šibalić, Bishop of Reforming-Christian Church in Serbia Béla Halász, Dean of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology University of Belgrade Professor Dr Predrag Puzović, priestess of the Slovak Evangelic Church Anna Petrović, Chairman of the Association of Serbian-Indonesian Friendship “Nusantara“ Dr Aleksandar Raković and the coordinator of the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue Jovana Stojinović.

The Dialogue started by an introductory meeting on Sunday, 8 November 2015 when the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dačić received the Head of the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia – Dr Abdurrahman Fachir.

Further on, the Ambassador of Indonesia to Serbia – Harry Richard James Kandou hosted a dinner in the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia to mark the beginning of the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia and the arrival of the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia headed by Dr Fachir.

The official opening of the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia was marked by the conference held in the Palace of Serbia. The conference was dedicated to the youth-related topics and it took place on Monday, 9 November 2015. After the introductory speeches of Minister Selaković, Patriarch Irinej and Vice Minister Dr Fachir, Dr Aleksandar Raković proclaimed that the Third bilateral interfaith dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia was officially opened. Thereupon the press conference was held where Minister Selaković, Patriarch Irinej and Dr Fachir gave statements. They underlined friendship of our two countries, the importance of dialogue and an affirmative role of youth in a contemporary society. Further on, two scientific sessions took place, opened by the presentation of Dr Mileta Radojević. All the members of our delegation presented at the conference and almost all the members of the Indonesian delegation presented as well: Directors General of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for Roman Catholic Community and Hindu Community Eusabius Bensasi and I Ketut Widnya, Dean of the Islamic state University Dede Rosyada, the representative of the Roman Catholic Church father Ignatius Ismartono, the representative of Protestant Churches father Penrad Siagian, the representative of the Orthodox Christians in Indonesia Christina Jenny Sandra, the representative of the Centre for interfaith harmony of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Wawan Djunaedi, Dr Izak Lattu, Professor of the Christian University Satya Wacana and Dr Mohamed Iqbal Ahnaf, Professor of the Gadjah Mada University.

The conference took place shadowed by the impression of simultaneous voting in the General Assembly of UNESCO on the admittance of the so-called “Kosovo” into that organisation. At the previous voting in the Executive Council, the Republic of Indonesia abstained from voting. The Republic of Serbia strived to convince the friends from Indonesia that it would be best if they could explicitly be against the admittance of “Kosovo” to UNESCO. It was obvious that just a few votes would be decisive and that the vote of the Republic of Indonesia in favour of the Republic of Serbia would be very valuable. As we have been informed, it was the President of the Republic of Indonesia Joko Widodo who decided that the Republic of Indonesia would vote explicitly against the admittance of “Kosovo” to UNESCO and thus bring to the Republic of Serbia one of the key votes. When the news from Paris arrived during the conference in the Palace of Serbia that the UNESCO General Assembly decided that “Kosovo” could not be the member of the organisation, the members of the delegations of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia stood up and applauded and by standing ovations greeted the decision of UNESCO General Assembly. The Republic of Indonesia once again showed that it stands firmly by the

side of international law and that it does not abandon its friends in difficult situations. The Bishop of Raška-Prizren Teodosije and hieromonk of Visoki Dečani Monastery Ilarion Lupulović thanked on behalf of the Orthodox Christians of Kosovo and Metohija to the friends from Indonesia.

On Tuesday, 10 November 2015 the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia was first received by the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia Maja Gojković, then by Serbian Patriarch Irinej, and then by Reis-ul-Ulema Adem Zilkić and Mufti Muhamed Jusufspahić. The members of the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia, headed by Dr Fachir were that day also guests of the President of the Republic of Serbia – Tomislav Nikolić. At all these meetings friendship between our two countries was pointed out, as well gratitude of our state officials and Patriarch Irinej for the principled standpoint of the Republic of Indonesia against the admission of “Kosovo“ into UNESCO. Since Dr Abdurrachman Fachir delivered a lecture at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade, and Professor Dr Dede Rosyada a lecture at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences of the Islamic Community of Serbia, the members of the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia visited the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade and the Sukkat Shalom Synagogue in Belgrade where they were hosted by the Rabbi Isak Asiel. The Jewish choir prepared a short performance for the guests.

On Wednesday, 11 November 2015 the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia visited the Diocese of Srem and the Diocese of Bačka of the Serbian Orthodox Church. In the morning Indonesian guests were received by the Bishop of Srem Vasilije Vadić in Sremski Karlovci. Friends from Indonesia visited the Cathedral in Sremski Karlovci, the Treasury of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Seminary “Saint Arsenije of Srem“ (Karlovci Orthodox Seminary). The choir of Orthodox theology students performed several Serbian spiritual and national songs, and then the Orthodox Christian from Indonesia Christina Jenny Sandra delivered a lecture, with the assistance of the Rector of Karlovci Orthodox Seminary Archpriest-Stavrophor Jovan Petković and Archdeacon Radomir Rakić. Thereupon the delegation visited the Chapel of Peace in Sremski Karlovci. Later on, in the afternoon, the delegation was welcomed in Kovilj Monastery by the Bishop of Bačka Professor Dr Irinej Bulović along with the Bishop of Jegar Jeronim Močević. Bishop Irinej underlined the importance of frequent interfaith meetings between the representatives of Serbia and Indonesia, which was unanimously greeted by the members of the Indonesian delegation. In addition, Bishop Irinej commented that the harmonious relation of the Orthodox and the Muslims in the Republic of Serbia showed to be an explicit example of the best relation of these two faiths in Europe.

On Wednesday, 12 November 2015, the delegation of Indonesia visited the Yugoslav Archives where they were welcomed by Miladin Milošević, the Archives Director. The guests looked at the exhibition *Belgrade-Jakarta, from the establishment of diplomatic relations to today* and were informed about the research and the book *Yugoslavia-Indonesia 1945-1967: Research and Documents* of Profesor Dr Ljubodrag

Dimić, Dr Aleksandar Raković and Miladin Milošević. Thereupon the delegation visited the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, where they were cordially welcomed by the Dean, Professor Dr Predrag Puzović. The Memorandum signed during the First Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue between the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia (in 2011) was renewed on this occasion between the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University on the one side and the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, on the other. Then Professor Dr Dede Rosyada delivered a lecture in a full lecture hall of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology. Following this, the members of the Indonesian delegation were the guests of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Belgrade where they were hosted by Archbishop Stanislav Hočevar. During the programme performed, songs were sung from our region, but also from Indonesia and Syria.

On Friday, 13 November 2015, farewell lunch was prepared for the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia. Patriarch Irinej, Dr Mileta Radojević and Eusabius Bensasi pointed out that the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia was very successful, and the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia Harry Richard James Kandou stated that the Government of the Republic of Indonesia decided that the Fourth Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Indonesia should be held in Indonesia in 2017. Indonesian delegation especially thanked, on behalf of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the organisers of the Third Bilateral Interfaith Dialogue – Dr Mileta Radojević and Jovana Stojinović.

The delegation of the Republic of Indonesia was accompanied by the Head of the Department for Asia, Australia and Pacific in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Aleksandar Janković, then Saša Jovanović from diplomatic Protocol, priests of the Serbian Orthodox Church Professor Dr Dragomir Sando and Archdeacon Radomir Rakić, Imams of the Islamic Community of Serbia Emin Zejnulahu, Ramadan Mehmeti, Muhamed Ziljkić and the Chief of the Office of the Mufti of Serbia Muedib Šahinović.