

Foreign Minister Pettigrew offered Canada's congratulations to President-elect Susilo Bambang Yudoyono, as well as to the Indonesia people, this past week on the successful completion of historic, first-ever, direct presidential elections. Minister Pettigrew remarked that Indonesia, with the world's largest Muslim population and as one of the world's largest democracies, is a model for many countries, and that Indonesia's success is an indication that its democratic process is strong.

So it is an important time for us to be gathering here to examine the Canada-Indonesia bilateral relationship. I hope that we can use this meeting today to do two things: first, share our analyses of recent developments in Indonesia; and second, look at the implications of these developments for Canada-Indonesia relations and hopefully find some new ideas for moving forward.

As for the first task, my own analysis is fairly straightforward. Something truly remarkable has happened this past year in Indonesia. I've called it elsewhere "the year of living democratically". Indonesians have pulled off the most complicated elections in the world and have done so with tremendous success. 148 million Indonesians were eligible to go to the polls three times this year to cast ballots for 447,000 candidates for three levels of government, 24 political parties and 5 presidential candidates at 393,000 polling stations; they printed, distributed and counted over 660 million ballot papers across the archipelago to determine their elected representatives, and conducted the largest, direct presidential election in the history of the world. Moreover, the democratic process was free, fair and peaceful. The turnout for all three elections was very high, in the 80 % range.

Indonesia has been on the road to democracy, reform and stability for five years now. This past year has not only helped to solidify this process, but has demonstrated to the world the significant changes that have taken place in Indonesia in a very short time.

It is important to recognize this great achievement and to seize the opportunity to identify ways by which we can build on our bilateral partnership.

And that is the second task that I hope we can take up today. I would like to challenge you to think about what these great developments in Indonesia mean for our bilateral relations. One implication seems clear - the more Indonesia develops along the path towards a stable democracy with strengthened public institutions and open, transparent, efficient markets, the greater the potential for