

Over the course of 2002-2003, our countries marked an important milestone and celebrated appropriately the 50 years of our bilateral relations. Our activities encompassed a broad range of events. We published a new book that focused on the enormous reservoir of good will, understanding, mutual respect and genuine joy between Canadians and Indonesians that has been the energy source at the heart of our relations.

We have held cultural events together, celebrating our music, our dance, and our wonderful artists.

But probably the most important of this fruitful period was the Symposium Enhancing Indonesia-Canada Partnership: Challenges and Opportunities. Through the very deliberate and open discussions between our two peoples we were able to formulate a set of recommendations that will allow us — together - Indonesians and Canadians — to build a better future for our children and our children's children.

Today, in the same spirit, we gather here to discuss our future bilateral relations under a new aegis; in the aftermath of historic general elections in my country; elections which were conducted peacefully and which mark a new shape of government in Indonesia. It is with the greatest pride that I announce to all of you here today that my countrymen are now engaged fully in the adventure of democratization -an adventure that will lead not only to a better Indonesia, but to a better world.

I don't need to tell anyone here today that my vast multicultural country is the fourth largest country in the world -and of course, the largest Muslim country-now largest Muslim democracy- on the face of the earth. Just think about it! In this extraordinary year we had three elections.

Firstly, Indonesians elected members to the House of Representatives in the General Elections of 5 April. There were 148,000,369 registered voters, and an astonishing 124,420,339 (84, 07%) voters cast ballots. Secondly, we had presidential/vice-presidential elections. In the first round presidential election on 5 July 2004, the numbers of registered voters were 153,320,544 with 122,293,844 (79.76%) casting ballots. None of the five pairs of the presidential/vice-presidential candidates in the first round succeeded in winning a majority vote (50% cast plus one).

Therefore, according to the existing law, the two pairs of candidates emerging with the most votes have had to participate in a