



REPORT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE ON INDONESIA

March 13, 2000

Victoria, British Columbia

A roundtable organized by the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development and the Southeast Asia Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs was held on March 13, 2000, in Victoria, British Columbia. Academics, federal government officials, military policy analysts, election observers, human rights monitors, regional security specialists, leaders of NGO initiatives and students of Pacific Rim Studies met to discuss current issues in the context of recent political and economic reform processes in Indonesia and to offer advice on future Canadian policy developments. The roundtable was a follow-up to a recent and similar meeting in Montreal, Quebec. Canadian Ambassador in Indonesia, Ken Sunquist, was a resource person. The roundtable focussed on issues related to Indonesia's current transition, the roles of Indonesian civil society groups and roles of Canadian civil society and the Canadian government in furthering bilateral relations with an evolving Indonesia.

SETTING THE CONTEXT:

Background documents with an analysis of recent Indonesian developments and critical issues such as national stability and unity, threats to democracy and the development of civil society were distributed to participants before the roundtable. As an introduction to the dialogue, Canadian Ambassador, Ken Sunquist, gave a briefing on the current transition processes taking place in Indonesia.

Ambassador Sunquist related that East Timor is moving forward and predicted in two years it should be a small independent country. He said there is some sense of legitimacy in Indonesia because of the recent independence movements of East Timor. Indonesia, itself, is in deep transition. Democracy, although not institutionalized, is being talked about openly. This shift in thinking has not translated to power-sharing as yet. There is a lack of cohesion in the Government Cabinet. The Prime Minister is the visionary and tends to approach one issue at a time. His foreign policy outreach has been excellent.

The next three years and subsequent election will be the real test for Indonesia. Civilian control of the military is showing some signs of movement. The role of the military in the reform agenda and the everyday life of Indonesia is a critical issue for Indonesia. Intertwined is the process of decentralization taking place in the country. Seen as a political issue, rather than an economic one, the rules of the decentralization process have not been fleshed out. This is a problem for foreign investment and the number one issue for Canada to be watching.