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BANDUNG CONFERENCE 1955 AND BANDUNG COMMEMORATIVE CONFERENCES 2005 AND 2015: EXCERPTS FROM THE DECLARATIONS OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENTS

Presented by Darwis Khudori

Under the auspices of Indonesian government, States of Africa and Asia have been involved in the 1955 Bandung Asian-African conference and its commemorative conferences in 2005 and 2015. At every conference, they produced an official statement, communiqué or declaration.

This article is aimed at presenting briefly the content of those documents. It is not intended to review the whole documents in exhaustive way, but to quote the passages considered to be significant in relation to the evolution of socio-cultural and politico-economical situation in Africa and Asia during the last 60 years.

THE 1955 BANDUNG ASIAN-AFRICAN CONFERENCE FINAL COMMUNIQUE

The 1955 Bandung Conference was held during the Cold War following the WW II. The world order was dominated by two blocks of superpowers: West (capitalist) and East (communist). The African and Asian countries who just took back their independence from Western colonial occupation were struggling for securing their independence, living in peace in order to improve their living condition and helping other colonised countries to get out from colonial occupation. The Final Communiqué of the 1955 Bandung Asian-African Conference is marked by these preoccupations. It gave birth to an idiom “Bandung Spirit”. This idiom has however never been defined in any official document. It was identified sometimes as “anti-colonialism”, “non-alignment”, “solidarity”, etc. I personally found that “Bandung Spirit” represents a common wish for: 1) a peaceful coexistence between nations; 2) the liberation of the world from the hegemony of any superpower, from colonialism, from imperialism and from any kind of domination of one country by another; 3) the equality of races and nations; 4) the solidarity with the poor, the colonised, the exploited, and the weak and those being weakened by the world order of the day; and 5) a people-centred development. It seems to me that these are the core or the permanent elements that characterise the following “Bandung Spirit-based” conference declarations. The last part of the Final Communiqué of the 1955 Bandung Asian-African Conference represents those points.

The Asian-African Conference gave anxious thought to the question of world peace and cooperation. It viewed with deep concern the present state of international tension with its danger of an atomic world war. The problem of peace is correlative with the problem of international security. In this connection, all States should cooperate, especially through the United Nations, in bringing about the reduction of armaments and the elimination of nuclear weapons under effective international control. In this way, international peace can be promoted and nuclear energy may be used exclusively for peaceful purposes. This would help answer the needs particularly of Asia and Africa, for what they urgently require are social progress and better standards of life in large freedom. Freedom and peace are interdependent.

The right of self-determination must be enjoyed by all peoples, and freedom and independence must be granted, with the least possible delay, to those who are still dependent peoples. Indeed, all nations should have the right freely to choose their own political and economic systems and their own way of life, in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Free from mistrust and fear, and with confidence and goodwill towards each other, nations should practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors and develop friendly cooperation on the basis of the following principles:

1. *Respect for fundamental human rights and for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.*
2. *Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.*
3. *Recognition of the equality of all races and of the equality of all nations large and small*
4. *Abstention from intervention or interference in the internal affairs of another country.*
5. *Respect for the right of each nation to defend itself singly or collectively, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.*
6. (a) *Abstention from the use of arrangements of collective defence to serve any particular interests of the big powers.*
(b) *Abstention by any country from exerting pressures on other countries.*
7. *Refraining from acts or threats of aggression or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.*
8. *Settlement of all international disputes by peaceful means, such as negotiation, conciliation, arbitration or judicial settlement as well as other peaceful means of the parties own choice, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.*
9. *Promotion of mutual interests and cooperation.*
10. *Respect for justice and international obligations.*

THE 2005 DECLARATION ON THE NEW ASIAN-AFRICAN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

While keeping the ten principles of the 1955 Bandung Asian-Conference as reference, there is something new in the 2005 Asian-African Conference declaration: “*people-to-people interaction, particularly business, academia, and civil society.*” This corresponds to the evolution of socio-political structure in African and Asian countries. The Bandung Era (approximately 1955-1970) was marked by the struggle for independence and for nation building during which people and government formed a sole socio-political entity. The following period, in which the countries had re-conquered their independence and the government stressed its policy on economic growth, the socio-political entity started to split, the government policy and the parliament behaviour did not always represent people’s aspiration, people’s organisations started to appear and develop into N.G.Os, trade unions, neighbourhood associations, social and solidarity movements, gender mainstreaming... This new reality has been integrated into the 2005 declaration. Yet, the stress of African and Asian government policy remains economic development without putting into question the world economic order. In their agenda, African and Asian States planned to organise “*A Business Summit in conjunction with the Summit of Heads of State/Government will be held every four years*”. On the other hand, nothing was planned for academia and civil society. There is no statement either in what way African and Asian States deal with academia and civil society. The following passages represent this reality.

We underscore the urgency of promoting economic development in the Asian and African regions, as stipulated in the 1955 Bandung Conference. We stress that poverty and under-development, gender mainstreaming, communicable diseases, environmental degradation, natural disasters, drought and desertification, digital divide, inequitable market access, and foreign debt, remain as issues of common concern which call for our closer cooperation and collective action.

To this end, we hereby declare, as an expression of our new political will, the establishment of a New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP) as a framework to build a bridge between Asia and Africa covering three broad areas of partnership, namely political solidarity, economic cooperation, and socio-cultural relations. The

strategic partnership provides a momentum in achieving peace, prosperity and progress, and will be based on the following principles and ideals:

- 1. The Ten Principles of Bandung of the 1955 Asian-African Conference;*
- 2. Recognition of diversity between and within the regions, including different social and economic systems and levels of development;*
- 3. Commitment to open dialogue, based on mutual respect and benefit;*
- 4. Promotion of non-exclusive cooperation by involving all stakeholders;*
- 5. Attainment of practical and sustainable cooperation based on comparative advantage, equal partnership, common ownership and vision, as well as a firm and shared conviction to address common challenges;*
- 6. Promotion of sustainable partnership by complementing and building upon existing regional/sub-regional initiatives in Asia and Africa;*
- 7. Promotion of a just, democratic, transparent, accountable and harmonious society;*
- 8. Promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development;*
- 9. Promotion of collective and unified efforts in multilateral fora.*

We resolve that the sustainability of the NAASP shall be conducted through three tiers of interaction: an intergovernmental forum; sub-regional organizations; and people-to-people interaction, particularly business, academia, and civil society.

We are determined to develop an institutionalized process of the NAASP through convening: a Summit of Heads of State/Government every four years; a Ministerial Meeting of Foreign Ministers every two years; and Sectoral Ministerial and other Technical Meetings when deemed necessary. A Business Summit in conjunction with the Summit of Heads of State/Government will be held every four years.

THE 2015 ASIAN-AFRICAN CONFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Unlike the previous conferences, the 2015 Asian-African Conference produced three documents successively: 1) The Declaration on Reinvigorating the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership; 2) The Bandung Message; 3) The Declaration on Palestine. These documents seem to be in line with the orientation of the Indonesian government under the leadership of President Joko Widodo. Inspired by Soekarno's teachings, Joko Widodo's political line is oriented towards national (cultural, economical and political) sovereignties, social justice, people-centred development, solidarity toward the sufferings. He is also surrounded by advisors from progressive scholars, intellectuals and activists of social movements. His opening statement to the conference clearly expressed his political orientation (see Joko Widodo's opening statement in the Introduction of this book). The three documents of the 2015 Asian-African Conference show clearly their affinity with this political orientation. We find in the documents many terms familiar to the discourses of social movement and alter-globalisation like "South-South", "North-South", "Stakeholders", "Food Security", "Energy Security", "Gender Equality", "Women Empowerment"...

1) Declaration on Reinvigorating the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership

This is the outcome of the 2015 Asian-African Conference held in Jakarta on April 22-23, 2015. Let us quote some passages:

10. While reaffirming that South-South Cooperation and its agenda have to be set by countries of the South, we call for the active involvement of development partners and other related stakeholders in various mechanisms within South-South Cooperation and triangular cooperation to inter alia, mobilize their supports, share and exchange best practices, as well as promote transfer and development of technology, to further enhance South-South cooperation initiatives based on the principle of mutual benefit, non-

conditionality, equality, national ownership, respect for national sovereignty, as well as non-interference in domestic affairs. We also recognize that South-South Cooperation continues to serve as a complement to, and not a substitute for, North-South development cooperation.

11. We are committed to carrying forward the NAASP by implementing ambitious goals and practical initiatives, with the aim at enabling Asia and Africa to play a more active, coordinated and leading role on various issues of common concern. We, therefore, call on our Ministers and officials to galvanize necessary actions to arrive at a successful conclusion on the 8 Focus Areas of Cooperation as recommended by the NAASP Senior Official Meeting in Jakarta, October 2009, namely Counter Terrorism; Combating Transnational Organized Crimes; Food Security; Energy Security; Small and Medium Enterprises; Tourism; Asian-African Development University Network; Gender Equality and Women Empowerment. We instruct our officials to conduct future review and evaluation of the NAASP's activities periodically.

29. We will revitalize the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership by improving its operational framework by:

- Organizing a Commemorative Asian-African Summit every ten years;*
- Consolidating the institutionalized process of the NAASP by rotating the co-chairmanship of NAASP every four years as stipulated in the NAASP Declaration 2005;*
- Organizing biennial ministerial consultations at the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York to provide strategic direction for Asian-African partnership;*
- Organizing annual meetings between Co-chairs;*
- Strengthening people-to-people interactions, particularly in business, academia, media, youth and sports as well as civil society. In this regard, we encourage inter-regional University to University (U to U) cooperation, including the establishment of an Asian-African Academic Forum to strengthen closer collaboration among higher education institutions and academicians in the two regions. We also see the benefits of establishing a network of Asian-African think-tanks to enhance research and assist policy development.*

2) The Bandung Message 2015: Strengthening South-South Cooperation to Promote World Peace and Prosperity

This document was declared during the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the 1955 Bandung Asian-African Conference in Bandung on April 24, 2015. Here are some essential passages.

8. We reaffirm the importance of building harmony among cultures, religions, faiths and civilizations. We commit to collectively combating violent extremism, racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, while recognizing moderation as an important value in countering all forms of extremism, and to promoting dialogue, mutual respects, understanding and acceptance.

15. We express our strong opposition and condemnation to all unilateral coercive measures including sanctions which violate the Charter of the United Nations and undermine international law as well as the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among states.

25. We also recognize that each country faces specific challenges to achieve sustainable development, and we underscore the special challenges faced by the most vulnerable countries, which include least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and Small Island Developing States, as well as the specific challenges faced by the middle-income countries and the countries in situation of conflict or emerging from conflict.

34. *We reaffirm the importance of promoting democratic values. While acknowledging there is no single model of democracy, we are committed to forging cooperation in strengthening democratic institutions built on people's aspiration. We, therefore, underline the importance of strengthening democracy through dialogue and cooperation.*

35. *We stress the importance of strengthening people to people contacts by facilitating and encouraging interaction and exchange among youth, women, business, intellectuals, scholars, experts, athletes, artists, and media of the two regions.*

36. *We are determined to promote cooperation on gender equality and women empowerment, and vulnerable groups, particularly on the issues of better access to education, healthcare and employment opportunities, in order to increase their participation in all spheres of life.*

3) The Declaration on Palestine

The Final Communiqué of the 1955 Bandung Conference took care of five concrete questions: 1) the independence of North Africa; 2) the integration of West Irian into Indonesia; 3) the reunification of Vietnam; 4) the end of apartheid in South Africa; 5) the independence of Palestine. The first four questions have been settled before the 2005 Asian-African Conference, leaving Palestinian question unsettled until up to the present. Faithful to the Bandung Spirit, the 2005 and 2015 Asian-African Conferences maintained the Palestinian question in their declaration. The last conference considers the question urgent and present it in a special declaration. Let us read some passages.

1. *We, the leaders of the Asian and African countries remain committed to the principle of self-determination as set forth in the Final Communiqué of the Bandung Conference in 1955, and in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. We deplore the fact that sixty years since the Bandung Conference, the Palestinian people remain deprived of their rights, freedom and independence, and that millions of Palestinians are still living under occupation and as refugees, and that this historic injustice continues.*

2. *We, in the spirit of Asian African solidarity, pay tribute to the resilience and steadfastness of the Palestinian people in the face of the illegal Israeli occupation, and reaffirm our full support of the just struggle of the Palestinian people to regain their inalienable right to self-determination, including the realization of the sovereignty and independence of their State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the 4 June 1967 borders and relevant United Nations resolutions, as set out in the two-State solution.*

3. *We stress that the only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an agreement, which ends the illegal Israeli occupation that began in 1967, resolves all permanent status issues — Palestine refugees, Jerusalem, settlements, borders, security and water — and justly fulfils the inalienable rights and legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people. We further reaffirm that a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is imperative for achieving peace and security in the region.*