

To:

Prof. Darwis Khudori & all the Members of the 2015 Bandung+60 Spirit

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REPORTING A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF THE 2015 BANDUNG+60 INTELLECTUAL HARVEST: A Graphic Tribute

In what might be described as my synoptic reminiscence of the recent intellectual in-gathering at Jakarta, Bandung and Bogor, I wish to most profoundly express my unqualified gratitude to the man at the centre of the Bandung Spirit, Prof. Darwis Khudori, the energetic intellectual *cemen fondu* of the Bandung Spirit of our time, for a record-breaking intellectual harvest of a new and dramatic positive dimension of Asia-Africa co-operation untainted with any sense of neocolonial paternalism.

A sublime intellectual diplomat capped with a keen sense of critical judgment, untainted with dogmatic conspiracy and studded in Spartan energy, stoically addressing every emergent problem at every stage of the conference with stylistic confidence, Darwis indeed remains the undisputed architect of the intellectual dimension of the Bandung Spirit as it is interpreted today. His impressive *facond'agir* wrapped in a stylistic mastery of intellectual communication and circumstantial discretion spiced with a characteristic quick-witted culture of correspondence clearly cuts him out as a quintessence of intellectual leadership. I salute you Prof. Darwis.

His organizational dexterity and unassuming confidence strongly made a sense out of the essence of the Bandung Spirit. The sense in this regard being defined by his fervent commitment and phenomenal dedication to the success of the conference; a sense that justifiably proves that a strong and committed leadership among the Asia-Africa nations is all that is needed to pursue with vigor the essence of that Spirit that molded the 1955 Bandung Conference. Darwis you did well.

But Darwis you cannot take it all. It is imperative you share this cake of success proudly with all our co-conference participants, as well as our great and amiable Indonesian hosts. Truly the economic cost of attendance might have been a bit biting to quite a number of the participants, yet this cannot be measured with the extraordinary intellectual harvest of the moment iced with extraordinary hospitality and the accompaniments of sumptuous luncheons, exquisite socio-cultural presentations, interactive conviviality and the overall environment of excitement that attended the entire spectrum of the conference proceedings, both on-line and off-line.

From the Darwis-guided preliminary tour of the Museum of Textile History, through the African Trade Centre (ATC) to the 30th Jakarta Trade Expo; moving the next day to the Museum of Indonesian Presidents and the extensive Botanical Research Centre at Bogor, and then back for the opening ceremony at the *Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia* (LIPI) – Indonesia's citadel of scientific research, and moving afterwards to the seat of Jakarta's political power – the Governor's Lodge for an exceptional sumptuous luncheon and most exciting royal palace music and dance session; from where the same night off to the historic city of Bandung – the Global Seat of Asia-Africa Conference, where a shared-historic experience was manifested by the impressive archival visual records of the 1955 Bandung Conference at the Museum of Asia-Africa Conference.

The Bandung experience indeed presented a medley of historical spirituality, torrential

intellectual harvest and a commingle of impromptu but priceless instructions on traditional Indonesian bamboo musicology caked in a musical concert of budding little angels of unimaginable creativity and, finally crowned with the icing of yet another sumptuous dinner.

Returning to Jakarta, precisely at the wonderful Trisakti University in Grogol, we were greeted with the most gorgeous hospitality we ever had by both the Staff and Students as led by Prof. Tulus Tambunan, the fire-brand Head of the University's Center for Industry, SME and Business Competition Studies. Gorgeously adorned in exceptional batik-design outfits and gracefully stepping out in such a manner that created an air of pomp and pageantry, the students were out in numbers to witness our presence with a strong urge to unrestrictedly be part of the historic conference, thereby adding a tumultuous air of excitement to the whole business of the conference proceedings there.

The music, the dance performance, the exceptional air of interactivities and unimaginable crescendo of excitement on our arrival at Trisakti added glamour to the already charged splendor of the entire event. Our special Trisakti student guides – Vina, Tia, Leoni and Nora were exceptionally wonderful, magnetically adapting to the nuances of our communication difficulties and stranger-fright tendencies. Eka Swadiansa the architect-intellectual plenipotentiary of the up-coming liberal scholars of Wonderful Indonesia was always there to share ideas.

In all, the lyrics, rhythms and dance of the entire conference proceedings were all studded with new horizons and unique terrestrials of functional knowledge, intellectual bridge-building, composite exchange of ideas and unimaginable rich cultural expositions, all wrapped in a sanguine world of wild excitements. It was indeed a peripatetic intellectual experience that combined informal excursions with splendid academic explorations.

To state the obvious, Indonesia might not be a perfect society, but there is still something that makes it look WONDERFUL. More expectedly is the fact that there is nothing better than when a nation, being aware of its obvious imperfection strives vigorously to attain perfection, even though the mission of perfection by every global standard remains a mirage. Yes, Indonesia is a big nation by every standard of her size and economy, boasting the largest Muslim population of the world, secular and democratic with a strong westernizing instinct, yet tenaciously clinging to its characteristic sophisticated indigenous cultural values that sprouted from the diverse ethno-religious nationalities.

This strong sense of indigenous cultural consciousness enlivened by an evident de-colonized sense of nationalism in a world painted in unbridled radicalization of Islam remains a functional instruction to the nations of Black Africa where the two conflicting religions of Christianity and Islam have become a burden of conflict, destruction of lives and property, and intra-national political estrangements.

Talking of religious tolerance, the question then arises – what can be more symbolic of inter-ethno-religious tolerance in Indonesia than having an ethnic-Chinese Christian, the strikingly unassuming and charismatic Basuki Tjahaja Purnama as the Governor of the almighty City-Province of Jakarta? But the fact remains that Indonesia will only accomplish this legacy of ethno-religious tolerances of having Governor Purnama on the seat of power in Jakarta until he is re-elected. The world therefore awaits expectantly the re-election of the people's Ahok as the cardinal point of Indonesia's ethno-religious tolerance, accommodation and cooperation.

On the side of the participants, I can clearly state that I was exceptionally thrilled by the overwhelming conviviality that greeted such characteristic sphere of diversity. We came as different peoples from distinct backgrounds and cultures, yet for the brief moment of our intellectual in-gathering we interacted as one people with one mind in search of one objective – the meeting-point of the minds of Africa and Asia as expressed by the Bandung Spirit.

My fondness for the entire spectacle of intellectual pundits that graced the conference was ecstatically without bound. Beginning with our indefatigable hosts at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), there is no doubt as to their evident display of undiluted oriental hospitality garbed in their eagerness for functional institutional bridge-buildings and willingness to share ideas and Knowledge. The Chairman, Prof. Dr. Iskandar Zulkarnain appearing strikingly elitist with a characteristic tincture of intellectual command and nobility yet explicitly humble in carriage, presented a fascinating leeway to our knowledge of Indonesia's hidden treasure of knowledge as defined in their world of wonderful strides in science and technology.

The Vice skipper of LIPI, Dr. Ir. Akhmadi Abbas, was there also; supported by the three amazons of Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia – Dr. Ir Aswati – the Deputy for Social Sciences and Humanities, Ir. Sri Hartinah – Director, Centre for Scientific Documentation and Information, and Nur Tri Aries Suestiningtyas – Head of the Bureau for Cooperation, Legal and Public Relations, whose *hijab* outfit adornments presented more of a deceptive intellectual helmet over an enormous intellectual store-house than the expressed religious identity.

But there remains the African question in LIPI in particular and Indonesia in general – the question of exclusion from its global map of collaborations. Here one may ask – how would the Bandung Spirit be functionally and effectively actualized and sustained without an inclusive African Spirit within the intellectual bounds and historical conundrum of the Bandung Spirit as represented by Indonesia. We raised this question before at LIPI and we are raising it again. In effect, we look forward to seeing a readjusted LIPI global map transforming Africa from a blank space to a map dotted with institutional collaborations.

The intellectual wizardry of the two Keynote speakers – Ambassador Salman Al Farisi who earlier gave the opening speech at LIPI, and the glamorous soprano-voiced Prof. Dr. Sri. Adiningsih was diplomatically illuminating as much as it was economically instructive. Their presentations were a clear departure from the usual diplomatic gamble of soothing political terminologies to the arena of factual realities. The Indonesian Ambassador Emeritus of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Ambassador Sudirman Haseng was such a remarkable figure at the Bandung session that one cannot fail to commend the added diplomatic color his presence brought to the conference. The same commendation goes to Mohamad Hery Saripudin – Director of the Centre for Policy Analysis and Development on Asia-Pacific and African Affairs.

On the other intellectual divide as represented by the non-Indonesian participants, was the most striking in intellectual splendor perfected by a homily of critical delivery of noble ideas – the distinguished and quintessential Professor Manoranjan Mohanty of India whose staggering intellectual experience and commanding patriarchal presence added a charming grandeur to the entire conference proceedings. Always flanked by his equally erudite wife and companion par excellence Professor Bidyut Mohanty and exhibiting a strong sense of mutual romance and affection in such manner that could jealously put off a discordant young couple yet exhuming an air of connubial inspiration for the young and unmarried, their composite patriarch-matriarchal presence proved to be more of a lesson in dignity of marriage in old age than a show of their intellectual prowess.

The graceful and strikingly unassuming Professor Fatima Harrak of Morocco often under the cuddling guardian of her behind-the-scene husband provided an equally exceptional matriarchal grandeur to the conference. Theirs was equally a proof that the golden taste of connubiality can only be climaxed when driven by a composite sense of age and intellectual connubiality.

The seemingly quiescence and reserved but intellectually vibrant Professor Gloria K. Heidi of the Philippines – the intellectual foster-mother of my Putri Rediane formed the third of the

trio of conference matriarchs – the first and second being Bidyut Mohanty and Fatima Harrak. Heidi's remarkable sense of quietude was indeed ably betrayed by her unexpected outburst during the Palestinian presentations when she raised the question of the intellectual wisdom of the exclusion of the State of Israel.

The elegant and gorgeous Dr. Seema Mehra Parihar – exquisitely regal in feminism, graceful in steps yet masculine in delivery with sumptuous flamboyance in outreach, was always on hand at every perimeter of the conference inspiringly supported by a stream of intellectual like-minds of Indian extraction. There was that astonishingly charming Swati Chandorkar with her unassuming Yogesh Rathore co-presenter. There was also the easy-going Professor Nisar-ul Haq with Persis Taraporevala, among others. The Indians were there full-blooded.

The Nepalese were there also. Emerging from a disastrous earthquake-experience yet enlivened by the new wind of democratic spirit in their country and led by the ebullient Prof. Dr. Shreedhar Gautam of the Nepal Council of World Affairs, the Nepalese proved their intellectual mettle by a concerted revolutionary caking of an obvious inherent political conservatism. The lanky and exceptionally pleasant France-based Russian-born Dr. Polina Travert cannot be ignored either. Her magical sense of humor and cheerful display of electrifying frame of feminine candor was enough bait to emotionally trip off the unsuspecting masculinity in any man.

The Chinese team of ecological scholars as represented by Dr. Sit Tsui Margaret Jade and Lau Kin Chi was wonderful in delivery, executing with unusual calmness and intellectual taciturnity the gains of a tortuous research. Indeed for the Chinese, it was a case of men in mind but women in outfit. There was no gainsaying the fact that their energy-driven style of elocution and assiduous analysis of their facts clearly defied every odd in intellectual feminism.

Nor could the least be said of our very eloquent intellectual warrior of the Myanmar Rohingya genocide fame – the exiled Burmese scholar activist, Maung Zarni, whose classic and electrifying compendium of analysis on the Rohingya situation in Myanmar was pungent enough to push an unsuspecting audience into unusual action. His card was clearly and objectively laid on the table of the Bandung Spirit.

By contrast, the Palestinian trio of presenters – Ambassador Fariz Mehdawi, Noha Khalaf and Makram Khoury Machool working in tandem with the Brazilian intellectual conquistador – Dr. Beatriz Bissio, in relying so much on the usual Palestinian straitjacket analysis of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, could not make a formidable imprint on the minds of the audience. Much as the quest for an independent Palestinian State remains inevitable, there is no hiding the golden fact that Israeli has both the right of existence as a people and a State. To deny this fact, is to infringe on the fundamental basis of the Bandung Spirit.

From Japan comes the satirical environmentalist Yukio Kamino, whose seismic sense of his native environment wrapped in sarcastic intellectual sense of humor added an interesting spell of excitement to the conference. Always at home with an unusual mini-suitcase-branded walking-stick, he reminds one of the high degree of seismographic sensitivity every citizen of an earthquake-prone country is bound to live with.

Coming back to Black Africa – the land of my birth, the land of my conscience and the land of my identity, and talking about Dr. Lazare Ki-Zerbo of Burkina Fasso, it is still difficult to fully comprehend his sublime candor, unusual humble intellectual carriage and scintillating sagacity that so much clouded the success of the conference. There was no doubt that Ki-Zerbo was a fine gentleman whose unmatched humility and zealous adventurism was an unavoidable plus to the towering success of the conference.

The indefatigable Jean-Jaque Ngor-Sene, another scion of the Black African pride cannot by any standard of the success of the conference go without noticed. Seemingly shy to extant

social currents of the conference sidelines but always working assiduously to meet the benchmark of success, Prof. Ngor-Sene represents a mix grille of a conscious African blood, garbed with the customary French assimilation instinct being struggle to adapt to the social currents of American liberalism.

Dr. Ebrima Sall is another scion of Black Africa of Gambian ancestry whose combined intellectual sagacity and towering physiognomy cannot be ignored. It is yet to be tested if his obvious liberal intellectual background would fit inexorably into the surging fundamentalist torrents of Gambian islamization. The eclectic Adams Bodom of Ghana presents another visual manifestation of the African talent. Always on the move for the brief period of his presence in the conference and tenaciously clinging to his bag in a manner suggestive of the proverbial peripatetic African sage who travelled the length and breadth of the globe in search of extra-terrestrial wisdom but was never patient to calmly dispense his wisdom to the audience, his spectacle of appearance was an enlivening catalyst to the African presence.

One should understand the impossibility of recording the entire graphic scenario of the conference. At any rate, it is still impossible to dishonorably skip the flowering presence of our emerging youthful and budding scholars of the Bandung Spirit fame who, with unqualified humility eagerly perched on the great intellectual *iroko* among the great intellectual eagles of the Bandung Spirit. Foremost in this class of unusual intellectual adventurers which one cannot risk forgetting include the French-born Indonesian Nathalie Muchamad, Chilean-born Gonzalo Chesta, Indonesian-born Putri Rediane, Zimbabwean-born Takudzwa Mutezo and Sudanese-born Mohamed Khair.

Nathalie Muchamad most appropriately described as the visual driver of the conference was indeed a perfect match to the dogged efforts of a Darwis Khudori. Always clinging tenaciously to her camera with cuddling sense of dedication that only tells of a mother taking extra care of her child, and courteously displaying the colorful virtues of an obedient housewife whose resilience in labor exhumes an untainted affection from her husband, Nathalie no doubt defines a masterpiece debonair of African feminism, even though Indonesian in ancestry, and French in nationality.

Nor could the budding sterling qualities of the lyrical Putri Rediane – my favorite companion at the conference be ignored. Like the intellectual falcon she is, Putri was every where among the people exhibiting a strong sense of mutual interactivities and celestial sense of courtesy, chatting unrestrictedly with the participants and cheerfully explaining out any emergent question about her land of ancestry. Proudly Muslim with a strong Indonesian nationalistic instinct, when asked why she was not putting on the hijab, her response was sharp and simple: “I am a Muslim and my religion is in my heart; I do not believe that wearing a hijab will make a difference either.” Putri thus presents a definite figure in the emergent social liberalism that equitably defines the Indonesian society apart from the typical Muslim society in Asia and Middle East. To state the obvious, at a point the hunch for a Putri and my fondness for her attempted to rail me into considering having an Indonesian as a wife.

The subtly shy but radiant Takudzwa Mutezo, originating from Zimbabwe, studying in Netherlands and undergoing a short intellectual stint in Indonesian pattern of higher education represents yet a class of exceptionally talented rising African feminist stars. Soft-spoken and stylistic in analysis yet unsuspectingly exhuming enormous intellectual energy that scrupulously defied her tender frame of mind, Taku’s appearance clearly brought added beauty to the youthfulness of the conference.

For Gonzalo Andres Munoz Chesta of Chile, it was a sort of unexpected unearthing of a budding intellectual colossus among the intellectual sages. Instinctively calm in countenance but ebullient in thought and delivery of novel ideals, Gonzalo clearly displayed the potentials of an indomitable scholar. Allied with Gonzalo is our Sudanese student-Ambassador at-Large Mohamed Sabri Khair who, even though habitually more of an observer-participant provided

an interesting tool of excellent cross-cultural companionship. Nor is it appropriate to ignore the noble and patriotic presence of the Bandung-based Young African Ambassadors in Asia. Their leader Nsikan Ekwere of Nigeria was there flanked by other young Africans in search of the golden fleece in Indonesia.

And then finally there in far away Indonesia, stand out the Papuans, Black Africa's enigma of Southeast Asia. Our brothers in all but distinct only by way of distance separated by the long stretches of the Indian Ocean, sharing the same sentiment of Black identity, consciousness and quest for freedom. Propelled by the moving intellectual currents of the Bandung Spirit, they were there with their youthful force to present their case and show unflinching solidarity for Asia-Africa Spirit. They came with a petition to let the world recognize their enviable asset as the provider of oxygen to the world. The global citadel of oxygen we in continental Africa salute your courage. We believe that one day the gathering storm of the Bandung Spirit will overflow the torrents of neocolonialism and grant your desired freedom.

To those I could not mention, I wish to state that this is not intentional but the result of an overflowing mental data bank. This is the end of my testimony. Thanks to all.