



13th BALI DEMOCRACY FORUM
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OPENING REMARKS BY

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Bismillahirramanirrahim
Assalamu'alaikum warramatullahi wabarakatuh,
Selamat pagi,
Om Swastiastu, Namu Budaya, Salam Kebajikan,
Good morning,

Excellencies Ambassadors,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. First of all, let me warmly welcome everyone to the 13th Bali Democracy Forum.
2. A year after our last meeting ... the state of the world has changed significantly.
3. Covid-19 has impacted every fiber of our lives.
4. The pandemic is not only a threat to public health and the economy. It is also a test to democracy and our democratic values.
5. That is why our theme today "Democracy and Covid-19 Pandemic" is very timely.
6. This meeting will provide a good opportunity to draw lessons from each other and ponder on important question:

- What are the consequences of Covid-19 to democracy?
- How democracy works in dealing with a global pandemic? OR
- How do we sustain democracy in a post-pandemic world?

Distinguished Delegates,

7. In the past few years, surveys and studies have shown that democracy is in “recession”.
8. The EIU 2019 Democracy Index found that the average global score for democracy is at its lowest since 2006.
9. Freedom House report in 2019 also found that global freedom has been in decline for 14 consecutive years.
10. This pandemic has further intensified these sentiments and affected democracy in at least three ways:
11. **First**, government’s response to the pandemic has **exposed the polarization within our society**.
12. Emergency measures taken by the government to ...
 - restrict mass gathering;
 - carry out contact tracing and testing; and
 - enforce mask-wearing ...
 - are seen as a contest between individual freedom versus public health interest.
13. Without proper safeguard, there is a risk that this situation will be used to curtail basic freedom and suppress the voice of dissent in the society.
14. **Second**, the postponement of procedural democracy risks undermining democratic processes and sustainability.
15. At least 75 countries and territories have decided to postpone national and subnational elections due to Covid-19.

16. However, in countries where elections were held, there is also a dilemma between protecting health and exercising democratic rights.
17. Public health restrictions applied during campaigning and elections may raise doubt on the integrity and legitimacy of elections results.
18. **Third**, democratic space is being used to spread misinformation and disinformation.
19. These misinformation and disinformation potentially undermine the Government's effort to effectively mitigate and address the pandemic. For instance, disinformation campaign that misleads the public on Covid-19 treatments and vaccines.

Distinguished Delegates,

20. Despite these challenges, democracy offers a glimpse of hope and optimism for us to recover from this pandemic.
21. Some of the best performers in addressing Covid-19 are democracies.
22. The 2020 Democratic Perception Index survey shows that 78% of people around the world still believe that democracy is important to have in their country.
23. Therefore, the pandemic should not waver our commitment to democracy ... just as much as democracy should not hamper our efforts to effectively address the pandemic.
24. Our task ahead will not be easy ... we have to ensure that democracy can thrive in a post-pandemic world.
25. Allow me to offer three important elements for us to navigate this new landscape:
26. **FIRST, restoring trust to democracy.**

27. Democracy must provide a space for meaningful dialogue in public health policy-making during this pandemic.
28. This will form the basis of trust between the society and their government.
29. Studies from past pandemic responses showed that people will likely comply with emergency health measures, if they feel engaged in the decision making.
30. In Indonesia ... the Special Committee on Covid-19 Mitigation and Economic Recovery provides daily updates and reports on the pandemic response.
31. Transparency is key to building trust with the public.
32. At the early stage of the pandemics, I myself held weekly briefings to international media with other Cabinet members on our pandemic response.
33. Engagement with all stakeholders is another key factor in trust building.
34. Media and CSOs provide checks and balances to government's measures and pandemic response performance.
35. Our strong civil society have been actively involved in overseeing the Government's work, including through the Covid-19 Oversight initiative (*Inisiatif Kawal Covid-19*).
36. Together, we continue to promote transparency and public participation in restoring social trust and ensuring that democracy continues to deliver during this challenging time.
37. **SECOND, safeguarding democratic norms post-pandemic.**
38. We have seen how the fundamental aspects of our democracy changed during this pandemic.

39. The ability to assemble, to vote and deliberate in public are made harder.
40. The need for decisive and top-down policies may have undermined the usual practices of deliberation and accountability.
41. Under normal circumstances, this would simply be unacceptable.
42. However, according to the recent Democracy Perception Index, the majority of global population views that their countries are applying the “right amount” of restrictions.
43. This means that democratic norms are adaptable to the changing circumstances as long as they are legitimate, ... measured, taken in the public interest and open to public scrutiny.
44. These are the necessary safeguards that will prevent arbitrary use of emergency powers that violates basic freedoms.
45. On the other hand, the practice of democracy must continue to be upheld in this new environment.
46. Election standards are now adapting. For instance, election campaigns that involve mass gatherings are not encouraged.
47. At the same time, this should also be an opportunity to develop and normalize the use of mail or electronic voting for elections.
48. Just yesterday, Indonesia successfully held simultaneous local elections in 270 regions to elect local leaders. With strict health protocols and adapting to these changing practices, Indonesia democracy continues to work.
49. **THIRD, fostering democratic solidarity against the pandemic.**

50. The pandemic brought to light a long-standing debate between the primacy of individual rights and the well-being of the community.
51. For Indonesia, this is not an EITHER and OR situation.
52. Both can co-exist... Achieving a balance between the two requires us to approach this issue from the solidarity perspective.
53. Solidarity here means understanding that our individual rights come with a responsibility to comply with measures established in the public's interest.
54. Solidarity teaches us to always look after one another... For we are in this together.
55. The spirit of solidarity is an essential component of Indonesia's pandemic response.
56. In Central Java where I was born... the local government introduced a community-based program... to donate and distribute foods for people affected by the pandemic.
57. At global level... solidarity between countries is also required to effectively defeat this virus ... because no country is powerful enough to do it alone.
58. **No one is safe until everyone is.**
59. Only through solidarity... can we defeat the pandemic once and for all.
60. Only through solidarity... can we ensure that democracy serves as a force to UNITE... rather than to DIVIDE.
61. Embracing solidarity is our chance to reverse the democratic decline... to turn the tide of "democratic recession" into "democratic renewal".

Distinguished Delegates,

62. There are many lessons that we can learn from this pandemic.
63. Most importantly it has provided us a picture of the political systems that have responded to it.
64. Democracy is well equipped to address the pandemic ... from being responsive ... to being adaptable amid the changing circumstances.
65. After almost 11 months of responding to this crisis ... this is the moment for us to begin the hard work of responding to those lessons before the next pandemic threat arises.
66. For that, I am honored to officially declare the 13th Bali Democracy Forum open and may we all have a fruitful dialogue.
67. Let us begin our hard work today!
68. I thank you.
69. ***Terima kasih.***

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