



# The 14<sup>th</sup> Bali Democracy Forum

## Concept Paper

### DEMOCRACY FOR HUMANITY: Advancing Economic and Social Justice during the Pandemic

#### **Background**

The Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) was established in 2008 to create a progressive democratic architecture in the Asia Pacific region. In the past decades, the Forum facilitated dialogues through sharing experiences and best practices in managing diversity that encourages equality, mutual understanding and respect. Throughout the years, this has become the foundation of the Forum. In doing so, the BDF has also been active in advocating the principles of democracy – namely that it must be developed based on internal initiatives (home-grown); that it upholds the values of pluralism and diversity; and that it must be inclusive.

Over the years, the BDF has succeeded in making democracy a strategic agenda in the Asia Pacific. It has encouraged countries to establish a balance between economic and political development, between creating peace and security, and promoting human rights and fundamental freedom as well as respecting humanitarian values. All of which is reflected in the three founding pillars of the United Nations Charter.

The various themes that have been discussed in the BDF have resulted in new ideas being further promulgated and shared amongst countries. In its second decades, the BDF is expected to continue contributing to the region's peace and stability, to the promotion of human rights, and especially to further encourage the healthy balance between economic growth and political development.

Since its inception in 2008, the Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) has become an annual ministerial forum. A pertinent theme is selected every year to represent a variety of focus of the learning communities on democracy in Asia-Pacific and beyond while ensuring interlinkages issues between one BDF and others, as can be accessed through the BDF official website [www.bdf.kemlu.go.id](http://www.bdf.kemlu.go.id).

The 14<sup>th</sup> BDF is facing an unprecedented challenge with the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing recovery process. According to the UN Secretary-General Report (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic is reinforcing pre-existing obstacles to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, including structural inequalities. The report stated that extreme poverty has increased for the first

time in 20 years, with the pandemic is estimated to have pushed an additional 119 million to 124 million people into extreme poverty in 2020, of whom over half were women and girls.

The process of the long recovery and creating resilience might also be exacerbated by the growth of both temporary and permanent forms of exclusion towards vulnerable groups and individuals burdened by socially constructed stigma. Similar concerns have also been raised by leaders from developing and developed countries especially on the importance to recover stronger and build back better.

## **Theme**

As a learning democracy forum, the 14<sup>th</sup> BDF (2021) would share experiences and learn lessons to response to the most important challenges faced globally implicated by Pandemic Covid-19 in the form of worsening poverty, exacerbating inequality, and inflaming exclusion. Democracy should enshrine humanity through advancing economic and social justice. Consider the salience of the aforementioned focus, the theme BDF XIV (2021) would be on “**Democracy for Humanity: Advancing Economic and Social Justice during the Pandemic.**”

The aforementioned theme of The 14<sup>th</sup> BDF (2021) is generally aimed to explore the intrinsic, instrumental, and constitutive roles of democracy in grounding economic and social justice in enshrining humanity. Particularly, the forum would enable comparative learnings among democratic and aspiring democracy experiences in responding the aggravating challenges of poverty, inequality and social exclusion.

Several underlying deliberations for the theme are:

1. Pandemic leads to multi-aspects crises and puts the challenges on upholding humanity as the core principles and objectives of democracy in dealing with crises.
2. Pandemic intensifies economic injustices by worsening the existing poverty and widen inequality.
3. Pandemic exacerbates social injustices through exclusion and discrimination.
4. The way forward in ensuring democracy to remain effective to bring economic and social justice to the community.

### • **Humanity and Democracy**

The relationship between democracy and humanity is not always practically working simultaneously. In the time of crises, the vulnerable often suffered the most of the costs of politics and public policies. Democracy based politics – governing through norms, institutions, and practices – are replaced by identity-based politics, short-term interests, and discrimination. Above all, addressing the impact of the pandemic requires not only economic but also socio-political recovery.

Within this context, the core challenges of BDF is to enable the forum to reimagine Pandemic as a new beginning. It is a turning point to create democratic institutions that deliver health, economy, and justice. Democracy that is serving for the needs and aspiration of people is the core focus of democracy for humanity.

### • **Economic Injustice**

Pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of the global economic structures which leads to increasing economic injustice in many countries. Policies to curb the COVID-19 including lock-

down and limitation of economic activities, has caused disruption to global supply chain, increased unemployment, and raising dependency to social support.

The clear manifestation of economic injustice is the emergence of poverty and inequality. In practical term, democracy for economic justice indicates to the norms, institutions, and practices of politics grounded in people's participation to effectively respond to poverty and inequality.

- **Social Injustice**

The increasing phenomenon of discrimination, exclusion, domination, and coercion during the COVID-19 Pandemic have impacted the people in many societies in terms of limiting access to health, educations, economic opportunities, and decent jobs. These impacts have further exacerbated towards the poor and most vulnerable people especially women, children, elderly, and person with disability.

These conditions have led to increasing social injustice at the national, regional, and global level. Different capabilities among developed and developing countries have also impacted efforts in addressing the economic and social injustice. In order to address those challenges, it requires among others, norms-setting, institutional building, and more meaningful people's participation in public policy making processes.

- **Guiding Questions**

As a forum of sharing experiences, dialogues, and building initiatives for democracy supports in Asia-Pacific, the 14th BDF trying to address several critical questions in order to provide profound collective responses which hopefully will enable the democracy to deliver for humanity and dealing with economic and social injustice exacerbated by the pandemic.

- a) How effective is democracy in addressing the economic and social challenges during the pandemic and post-pandemic era?
- b) How the pressing challenge on Democracy posed by the Pandemic affect the state responses?
- c) How does the Pandemic deepen and intensify the conditions of economic and social injustices?
- d) How democracy can ensure that humanity is fully upheld during the Pandemic?
- e) What are the lessons learned and experiences thus far that enables democracy works for humanity, in particular in advancing economic justice and harnessing social justice?
- f) What will be the way forward for democracy to advance economic and social justice?

### **Outline of the Forum**

The main objective of the Forum is providing platform for sharing experiences among state actors and invited stakeholders to share knowledge, insights, and understanding of the impacts of Pandemic in constraining democracy delivers for humanity. At the same time, it aims to share experiences and lessons learning on enabling democracy secure and advance economic and social justices.

With the adjustment due to the Pandemic, the 14<sup>th</sup> BDF will be convened on hybrid format. Its three main pillars: Bali Civil Society and Media Forum (BSCMF), Bali Democracy Student Conference (BDSC), and Panel on Inclusive Economy, have conducted early discussion on the

Road to BDF series on October and November 2021, as an attempt to discuss the main theme for this year's BDF.

The BCSMF is intended to engage the civil society, media, and academic communities to share diversity experiences and views on the theme and assess the policy choices in responding the challenges. The Forum will be attended by participants from various backgrounds, such as community leaders, NGO activists, academicians, researchers, journalists, and public figures from the region and global.

The BDSC is a forum to enable the students, both locals and international, to deliberate and share views and experiences on various topics pertinent to the theme of the Forum.

The Panel of Inclusive Economy was developed as part of the BDF main pillars since last year. The contributions and engagements of private sectors through the panel would enrich the discussion of the BDF theme. To include private sector in a democratic forum such as BDF will harness the goal of making democracy and development balance and on the same time enable governance inclusive. The panel will serve as a platform to discuss challenges and formulate concrete recommendations and initiatives according the selected BDF theme.

The 14<sup>th</sup> BDF Opening Session will be attended by participants and observers of the BDF in-situ and virtually, the BCSMF and the BDSC as well as the Panel of Inclusive Economy representatives. The Session will consist of the opening remarks by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia followed by thematic discussions.

Following the Opening Session, there will be Thematic Discussions session to signify the sub-theme of Poverty, Inequality, and Exclusion, derived from the general theme of "Democracy for Humanity: Advancing Economic and Social Justice during the Pandemic".

The Thematic Discussions session focuses on the good practices and policy building experiences in advancing Economic and Social Justice during the Pandemic. The session will share experiences of making democracy delivers for humanity.

The Thematic Discussions would be expected to inspire the dialogue, illuminate new insights, and provoke further assessments to possible solutions of various elements of efforts to respond social and economic injustices. The topic of Thematic Discussions will be:

1. Democracy for Humanity: Addressing Inequality.
2. Democracy for Humanity: Addressing Poverty.
3. Democracy for Humanity: Advancing Inclusion.

The Forum will assemble in the cross-panel plenary, where representative of each pillar would serve as panel to report and engage in the dialogue regarding "Democracy for Humanity during and Post-Pandemic: A Strategic Agenda." Each pillars organizes series of meeting in October and November on the occasion of "Road to BDF" to formulate some insights and recommendations.

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