

Draft, 5 March 2009

Social Democracy in Southeast Asia: Challenges, expectations and ideas for consideration

Summary

On March 4th and 5th 2009 about 20 representatives of social democratic parties, pre-parties and fraternal organisations from Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Europe met in Jakarta/Indonesia

1. to elaborate on the impact of the world-wide financial and economic crisis on Southeast Asia and if possible draft a response of Social Democratic Parties and Movements in SEA. (For the outcome of the discussion on this topic please refer to the attached paper)
2. to consider the possible setting up of a “Network of Social Democratic Parties and Movements in Southeast Asia”;
3. to discuss a list of priority issues and an eventual agenda for further proceedings of such a Network;

The challenges of the present global financial and economic crisis were just one additional proof for the necessity of re-thinking the regional cooperation between social democratic parties and movements in Southeast Asia and beyond. Networking has already taken place in the past e.g. at Party Congresses, OPIC and FES conferences, the last one held in October 2008 in Yogyakarta. However, there existed no formal arrangements until today.

There was consensus that a more formalised network could:

- mutually reinforce our activities
- encourage party building
- exchange experiences and learn from the others successes and failures
- express common social democratic positions vice versa other regional institutions especially ASEAN
- contribute to political changes in the region

The participants suggested the setting up of a Network of Social Democrats for Asia. The Membership should be predominantly made up of social democratic oriented political parties, pre-parties, social democratic youth and fraternal organisations. Furthermore the Network can invite individuals who are committed to the ideas and values of Social Democracy aiming to influence and change government policies. Those individuals might be re-

source persons, academic advisors or multipliers e.g. Journalists or persons who have constituencies in other organisations.

To disseminate the ideas and values of Social Democracy in general and the activities of this Network in particular a bi-annual journal and a website (<http://www.socdem.asia/>) will be created. Both will serve as platforms for regional topics and thus also be helpful in the creation of a regional social democratic identity.

For the “ Asia Journal on Social Democracy”, the Indonesian “Jurnal Sosial Demokrasi” will function as a model. Its editor Amir Effendi Siregar agreed to be the chief editor for the first two editions of the regional journal with the assistance of Ivan Hadar also from Indonesia and Joel Rocamora from the Philippines as well as one representative each from Thailand and Malaysia, who still have to be named. In this context the problem of different languages in the region was raised. As the journal will be published in English, the FES offices in Jakarta and Bangkok were asked to help out with translations into Thai and Bahasa, whereby it could also be distributed in Malaysia. Journal and website will also serve as a discussion fora.

FES Manila offered to be the host of the Network’s first meeting, the proposed date is 21st to 22nd May 2009. The topic of the 2 days conference will be the financial crisis and its implications on global, regional, national and local levels. Of special interested will be the question how the new paradigm – the results of the crisis and the reshaping of a new financial and economic order - effects people in rural and urban communities. The conference will compare experiences in the respective countries as this is an important aspect of political party building.