

IMEMO Experts Participated in the Program “Presidential Friends of Indonesia – 2011”



From 14 to 20 August 2011, IMEMO experts – Chief Research Fellow, Center for Development and Modernization, Dr. Victor V.Sumsky and Leading Research Fellow, Center for Asia Pacific Studies, Dr. Evgeny A.Kanaev – participated in the program “Presidential Friends of Indonesia – 2011”. The participants had discussions with top figures of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. M.Natalegawa, representatives of ASEAN Secretariat and the governing staff of Institute for Peace and Democracy, Udayana University. On 17 August, the participants attended the Grand Ceremony devoted to the 66th Anniversary of Independence Proclamation and were given a State Reception by the President of the Republic of Indonesia.

The exchange of opinions which took place during these events affords good grounds for new insights about development paradigms of Indonesia, Southeast Asia and Pacific Asia, as well as future relations between ASEAN and Russia.

In domestic policy domain, Indonesia’s leadership repeatedly stressed its intention to reinforce pro-democracy trends and make democratization a long-term and sustainable process. The country is being positioned as the biggest Muslim democratic state of the contemporary world, with the reciprocal influence of secular and religious vectors contributing to successful modernization. In Jakarta’s opinion, all this makes Indonesia a good example for other states to follow.

No less important is Jakarta's intention to link the democratic evolution of its domestic political institutions with a benign external milieu. As Mr. M.Natalegawa stressed, "Ten years ago Indonesia was facing severe internal problems. And we had to be completely concentrated on them – at the expense of active foreign policy. But we made a deliberate choice in redoubling efforts aimed at creating a regional milieu conducive to a successful implementation of domestic reforms. We were sure that it was not only a pressing necessity but the vital prerequisite for success".

Assessments relating to the future evolution of *Southeast Asia* are as follows.

First, Indonesia as the current ASEAN Chair is exploring new possibilities to raise ASEAN's rank in the priorities of both its members and dialogue partners. As Mr.Natalegawa emphasized, "Indonesian chairmanship has repeatedly marked a milestone in the development of ASEAN – suffice it recall the years 1976 and 2003. Now the time is ripe for a new breakthrough".

Second, Indonesia is planning to make a stronger contribution towards strengthening a democratic evolution of other ASEAN countries. In achieving this aim – a key priority of the future ASEAN Community – Jakarta sees an important prerequisite for sustainability of regional pro-democracy trends.

Apart from it, Indonesia gives special attention to increasing ASEAN capabilities to solve the problems which Southeast Asia is encountering without outside assistance. A practical step in this direction was made by the recent establishment of Institute for Peace and Reconciliation which is to develop novel approaches to these problems and provide ASEAN policy-makers with expert consultations and advice.

Last but not least, reiterations that the establishment of an ASEAN Community will require strengthening efforts of ten Southeast Asian countries indicate that before 2015 ASEAN expansion is unlikely.

With regard to *Pacific Asia*, noteworthy are Indonesia's attempts to lay down principles of cooperation between the members of the expanded East Asia Summit. In Jakarta's opinion, the basis for this "code of conduct" will not be principles developed by the association and outlined in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia but coincident provisions in the foreign policy documents of ASEAN partners. Another discernable trend is ASEAN intention to develop a unified approach to main international problems of Pacific Asia in order to create a benign milieu for Southeast Asia.

With those factors in view, good prospects for *ASEAN-Russia* relations can be forecasted. Main strategic priorities of both parties coincide – the Association and Moscow are interested in creating a well-balanced system of multilateral cooperation in Pacific Asia, which will bring greater stability to the region. In order for this scenario to be materialized, bringing more expertise in the foreign policy decision-making process in the ASEAN countries and the Russian Federation becomes a task of crucial importance and such programs as “Presidential Friends of Indonesia – 2011” provide for it a very useful venue.

