



Speech of Deputy Speaker of the Croatian Parliament Željko Reiner at a reception in commemoration of the 74th anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of Indonesia

October 7th 2019, Hotel Sheraton

Your Excellency, Mr. Ambassador Pagaralam,
Honourable Members of Parliament and Government,
Distinguished ambassadors,
Dear guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is truly an honour to be here with you today on the occasion of the 74th anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of Indonesia. Allow me to warmly greet you on behalf of Speaker of the Croatian Parliament Mr. Gordan Jandroković, members of the Croatian Parliament and myself.

Indonesia is a country that leaves you speechless. Beautiful sceneries, magical beaches, magnificent temples and historical sites attract many tourist, including more and more tourists from Croatia. Although very remote, Croatia and Indonesia, with their diversities, share many similarities. We are both touristic countries, we are strongly committed to our heritage and we put a strong emphasis on preserving our vast natural recourses. I may add that we also share a passion for football, and thanks to Croatian football player Marko Šimić who plays for *Persija Jakarta*, our ties have become even closer.

I am very pleased that frequent and friendly communication between our countries on all levels confirms our common interest of deepening and strengthening the existing friendly cooperation. I am very proud that cooperation of our parliaments is excellent. I personally had the honour to meet Vice Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia two years ago in the Croatian Parliament. I also had the honour to meet several Indonesian Parliamentary delegations. Last year I welcomed Committee for Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation of the House of Representatives in Zagreb. In 2017 I had here in Zagreb very constructive talks with members of the Household



Committee and five years ago I met with Indonesian-Croatian Friendship Group in Zagreb. In 2016, in my capacity of the Speaker of the Parliament at that time, I had an opportunity to welcome Commission on Defence, Foreign and Information Affairs of the Indonesian House of Representatives.

As you see, communication of our parliamentary committees and friendship groups is very frequent and fruitful. Continuous cooperation of our parliamentarians can bridge our geographical distance, since parliamentarians can enhance people-to-people and business-to-business contacts. I believe that parliamentary diplomacy is very important in overall cooperation between our two countries. This type of diplomacy is more flexible and not as rigid as the "official diplomacy" of the executive branch of government.

When it comes to our economic cooperation, it is important to stress that Croatian Government is working hard to improve investment climate in Croatia and we hope that Indonesian investors will recognize these efforts. This approach is based on strategic position of Croatia in regard to ASEAN countries with advantages in geographic position, as well as being a relatively new member of the EU. Therefore, Croatia can play a role of natural gates for Indonesian goods to the Central and Southeast European markets, but also to the whole EU. In this regard the main points might be Ports of Rijeka, Zadar and Ploče as starting points of very important EU transportation corridors. Using Croatian ports also shortens the time of travel of Indonesian goods up to five days, compared to using northern European ports.

Another great potential of cooperation is food industry. Croatian companies that produce *halal* products are interested in placing their goods on Indonesian market and there are solid foundations for development of *halal* friendly tourism. In this regard, it is important to remind that Croatia represents a highly successful model of inclusion of members of the Islamic community in the society. This model of coexistence can serve as an example. The Croatian Parliament has officially recognized Islam as an equal religion to Christianity in the Republic of Croatia in 1916, therefore making Croatia a second state in the non-Islamic world that has done so.



Ured potpredsjednika Hrvatskoga sabora akademika Željka Reinera

Indonesia's national motto "Unity in Diversity" presents a new, positive national identity of Indonesia. I cannot think of a better motto for the world as a whole. We should value our heritage that makes us unique and special, and we should enrich the world with diversities of our cultures and peoples.

At the end, Your Excellency, Mr. Ambassador, allow me to extend my sincere congratulations to you and to the people of Indonesia for the national holiday – the 74th anniversary of the Independence Day. I wish you prosperity, happiness and unity of your country and its people.

Thank you.