

SPEECH OF

H.E. MR. SUSILO BAMBANG YUDHOYONO
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF
THE 9TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS
ON AIDS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (ICAAP)

9 AUGUST 2009 DENPASAR, BALI

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim,

Assalamualaikum Wr. Wb.,

Oom Swasti Astu,

Peace be upon us,

Your Excellency, Honorable Misa Telefoni, Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa;

Your Excellency, Bapak Aburizal Bakrie, Coordinating Minister for People's Welfare;

Your Excellencies, Ministers of the Republic of Indonesia

Mr. Michel Kazatchkine [: MI-SHEL KA-ZATCH-KIN] Executive Director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria;

Mr. J.V.R. Prasada Rao [: PRA-SA-DA RAO], Director Regional Support Team Asia & Pacific UNAIDS;

Professor Myung-Hwan Cho, President of AIDS Society of Asia and the Pacific;

Professor Dr. Zubairi Djoerban [: ZUBAIRI JURBAN], Chairman of the 9th ICAAP;

**Ms. Caroline Thomas AND Mr. Gurmit Singh, Representatives from the 9th
ICAAP Community Forum;**

UN AIDS Ambassadors and Champions;

Brothers and sisters who are living with HIV;

**AIDS health care providers, advocates, researchers, community organizers,
peer educators, legal advisors;**

Governors of the provinces of Indonesia;

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

**Let me begin by extending a very warm welcome to all of you to this
island of Bali, Indonesia.**

**We gather here today to advance our common fight against one of
the world's most lethal and most successful killers : the HIV virus. To this
date, this virus has killed some 25 million people worldwide, and counting.
Some 75,000 people are said to contract HIV each day. In some countries
and communities, HIV has raised the specter of a "lost generation", a
generation where the youth are doomed before reaching or completing
their productive age. And in the short and medium terms, HIV death rate
will continue to climb because we still have not found a vaccine or a cure
for AIDS. Clearly, if we list the various global challenges that we need to
sort out in the 21st century – from climate change to food security, from
terrorism to diseases – combating HIV/AIDS would rank among the top of
that list.**

**Indonesia is therefore honored to host the Ninth International
Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific. I understand this conference is
a labor of love by those who have dedicated their lives to the fight against
HIV/AIDS. I thank the Local Organizing Committee, AIDS Society for Asia
and the Pacific, and international development partners who have worked
tirelessly for the success of this conference. I am truly honored to be here
with all of you – the remarkable and dedicated champions and pioneers
and heroes in the noble efforts to fight HIV/AIDS. To all of you, I give you
my salute.**

**We gather here at a point when we have made much mileage in the
fight against AIDS.**

We have come a long way since the days when the HIV/AIDS virus first came to be detected in the early 1980's. Back then, we knew so little about the virus and there was a moment when we responded to the rapid spread of HIV with a combination of hysteria, ignorance, mysticism, stereotype and prejudice. None of these things, of course, helped our cause to kill the deadly virus.

Today, we know a lot more about the HIV virus. We know what it is, and how it gets transmitted. We know how to slow it down. And most importantly, we know that WE CAN BEAT AIDS. Its not question of "if", but WHEN and HOW.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon rightly points out that "AIDS is one of the most devastating epidemics in history". Like any other major efforts, the struggle against AIDS will require a constant process of trial and error, and a constant search for new innovation.

At this juncture, we can already point to a few lessons that are critical to a successful response.

First, is leadership. The best way to strike a blow against AIDS is way of effective and sustained inter-sectoral policies that aim to prevent, contain and reverse the spread of AIDS. And these policies do not come by itself : they only come by way of leadership. Without leadership, the fight against AIDS becomes sporadic, reactive, without focus, lacking resources, and will eventually lose steam. In most countries, national leadership spells the difference between the slowing down and the acceleration of the spread of AIDS. This is indeed why in 2006, I established the National AIDS Commission (Komisi Nasional Penanggulangan AIDS), which operates autonomously and reports directly to me.

Second, is the importance of community involvement. Governments alone cannot tackle the AIDS problem, because this is a virus that reaches deep into every walks of life of the community. The community can provide the social cushion and safeguards, by spreading HIV awareness, by promoting prevention strategies, by promoting compassion care towards HIV carriers, and by partnering with Government. I am therefore very pleased to see so many community forums taking part in this conference. Indeed, it is said that this is the largest community forums participation in the ICAAP so far. This is the way it should be, and this is the way we should carry on forward.

Third, is the importance of regional and international cooperation. This is particularly important given that countries have different capacities and resources to deal with AIDS. Some countries, such as those in Africa, have a very high infection rate but minimal resources to deal with it. Never forget what the SARS episode taught us : that we CAN prevent an epidemic by way of effective and proactive international collaboration. That same principle applies in our fight against AIDS. I am glad that the international community reached a historic milestone in 2006 with the political declaration on HIV/AIDS issued at the UN General Assembly. They agreed to work together for universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010 – next year. This is a promise that we should keep, and the ICAAP can do much to realize this within our region and beyond.

Fourth, is the imperative of sustained and greater investment in the efforts to find a vaccine or a cure, or both – which today remains elusive. Yes, we have made good progress in the efforts to slow down the spread of AIDS. But so long as we do not have a vaccine or a cure, we will never fully win the war against AIDS. Both Governments and the private sector must work together to intensify research on AIDS. I am glad to note that in the last 10 years, the total annual resources for AIDS have risen by more than 30-fold, to US\$ 10 billion today. A good portion of that money MUST be spent to fund on-going research and development. It is an intense race - yes indeed. But WHOEVER wins that race to find a vaccine and a cure, WE ALL win, too.

All these four elements are bound together by a common thread: building partnerships, working together and sharing resources.

We have just heard the declaration of the AIDS Ambassadors and Champions for Asia and the Pacific. The declaration, that was beautifully read just now by the Indonesian AIDS Ambassador, First Lady Ani Yudhoyono ... I am sure her husband is very proud of her ... is a pledge of our commitment here in Bali to call on all Governments and partners to continue working together, with the necessary financial and human resource inputs, for a comprehensive response to AIDS. I endorse this statement wholeheartedly and I urge that it be implemented swiftly.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The previous speakers have given us an extensive overview of the global situation of AIDS. I think it is the consensus of this conference that

we see the glass half full, not half empty. Indeed, some countries have made good progress in reversing the spread of AIDS, and there are no reason why these achievements cannot be emulated in other countries as well.

In Indonesia, we also see the glass as half full.

It is currently estimated that there are some 270,000 people living with HIV in Indonesia, which is considered a low level epidemic. However, we cannot overlook this number because, like in other countries, the actual number could be higher, or significantly higher. There is high HIV prevalence among injecting drug users and sex workers in several areas. In the island of Papua, the epidemic has reached a low level generalized epidemic. The Asian Epidemic Modeling (AEM) projections show that if we do not act now, in ten years there could be two million Indonesians living with HIV. That is a scary prospect.

To prevent that possibility, Indonesia has undertaken a number of creative and proactive policies, especially in the last 3 years.

To begin with, we have launched the National HIV and AIDS Action Plan for the years 2007-2010, which outlines a comprehensive national guideline and strategy for HIV programs.

We have actively increased public awareness on HIV/AIDS and services for prevention.

Currently, we have 182 primary health centers, including NGOs providing services and information for drug users and prison inmates to prevent themselves from HIV infection. This is a huge increase from 2005, when there were only 17 health centers.

In the island of Papua, where the AIDS problem is acute due to social behavior, there are now more people willing to visit health centers for counseling and testing. This enables them to know their status and seek earlier treatment.

This new trend is also surfacing in other parts of Indonesia. More and more people are seeking counseling and voluntarily checking themselves for HIV. This is a good sign that shows the decrease in the stigma attached to HIV in Indonesia.

We have also tripled the provision of Anti-Retroviral Therapy to some 18,000 people across Indonesia, FREE OF CHARGE. There are now 296 Voluntary Counseling and Testing centers and 237 hospitals and community health centers that provide medicine to people living with HIV. There are also now 25 hospitals which provide prevention of HIV transmission from mother-to-child.

The Indonesian Government has also significantly increased its domestic resource allocation for AIDS. Between 2006 to 2009, the budget allocated for AIDS rose 7 times, from US\$ 11 million to US\$ 73 million. The provincial and district budgets also increased around 350 %, from Rp 20 billion to Rp 74 billion.

However, given the size of Indonesia and the complexity of the AIDS response, our work is far from done. Fighting AIDS in Indonesia is still very much an uphill battle.

We also acknowledge that resource gaps remain high. In this connection, I extend my appreciation on behalf of the people of Indonesia to multilateral and international donors, namely: the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the UNAIDS and the United Nations family; the Governments of Australia, United States, the European Union and others for their continued support and financial contributions provided to Indonesia's AIDS response.

Last but not least, we are improving our partnership response. Government departments are fully integrated in the national response. Government collaboration with civil society, faith-based organizations, communities of key population and people living with HIV is increasing and showing good results.

I am informed by the National AIDS Commission that there are now 5 national networks – positive women; people living with HIV; survivors of injecting drug use; sex workers; and the network of gay, trans-genders and men who have sex with men. They are all actively involved in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the national response.

This is precisely the kind of partnership that we need. While psychological barriers remain, we are seeing progress. Many people are now brave enough to speak out and share their stories.

They are involved in finding solutions to the difficulties that AIDS brings to their lives.

Ultimately, Indonesia has much to learn from others in the battle against HIV/AIDS. This is precisely why this ICAAP is of enormous importance to all of us, as it allows us to share our knowledge and experience, and update one another on what works and what doesn't, and on new innovations.

We will not defeat the HIV virus with only one approach or reaching only one segment of the population. We must all be part of the efforts. We need to promote a comprehensive, compassionate and inclusive approach. Always remember that we are dealing not just with a virus but with human beings : our family, our friends, our neighbor, our co-worker. While we strive to kill the virus, we must care to protect the human dignity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our struggle against AIDS only serves to remind us once more of the non-traditional, non-conventional threats that we all face today. In most occasions, they do not come attacking us in the form of invading armies. Instead, they come in various deceptive forms but with very deadly consequences. Climate change. Tsunami. Earthquakes. Forest fires. AIDS. Avian flu. Swine Flu. And Terrorism !

Indeed, as we gather here, the national and international media are awash with news about our fight against terrorism. For many years, we in Indonesia have done our best to disrupt, hunt and arrest terrorist cells. Unfortunately, we suffered a set back when terrorists struck two Hotels in Jakarta last July. As they say, *"in the fight against terrorism, the Government must always be right 100 % of the time, but the terrorist only need to be right 1 % of the time"*. This serves to remind us that terrorism is still a clear and present danger anywhere in the world – be they Jakarta, London, Istanbul, Madrid, or Mumbai.

I assure you that the recent attacks in Jakarta will not change the fact that Indonesia is a stable, peaceful democracy grounded on freedom, pluralism and tolerance, just as you see and feel here in Bali. And I have every confidence that, like in the past, we will be able to arrest and neutralize these terrorist groups, and bring them to justice. In the last few days, our security forces were able to raid some of their hiding places, killed them in shoot-outs, and seized explosives. We will keep hunting

them, and we will remain vigilant. But I speak on behalf of a grateful nation in expressing our deepest thanks and appreciation to the Indonesian national police and all those who have been able to spoil their dangerous plots. This is an important achievement, not just for the Indonesian people, but for the regional and international efforts against terrorism.

I also wish to commend all of you for keeping this Conference ON SCHEDULE in Bali, Indonesia despite the terrorist attacks in Jakarta last month. This is the way it should be. There is no better way to send a message to terrorists than to demonstrate that they cannot and will not deter us from freely and fearlessly living our lives and keeping our way of life. Whether you realize it or not, by coming here, you are showing solidarity with the people of Indonesia, and that is very much appreciated.

All these threats – terrorism, climate change, diseases -- remind us of the importance of protecting human security. We cannot have a solid national security so long as the chains of human security are broken and weak. Conversely, if our citizens are protected, safe, and healthy, then our national security will be enhanced.

It is my hope that greater collaboration and partnerships will arise from this importance conference. After all, it is only by “empowering people and strengthening networks” – precisely the theme of our conference today, can we bring the HIV epidemic under control. If we work together and work harder, I am certain that together we can achieve Universal Access for AIDS prevention, care, support and treatment by next year.

I wish you every success with the work you undertake in your own communities. All of you are the building blocks that we need to achieve our goals. God Bless you in your efforts and God bless us all.

Finally by saying *Bismillahirrahmanirrahiim*, I declare “THE 9TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON AIDS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (ICAAP)” open.

I thank you.

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
DR. SUSILO BAMBANG YUDHOYONO