

**Article for Serambi  
on the occasion of Europe Day, 9 May**

**The EU in Aceh – A Commitment to ‘Peace and Reconstruction’**

On the 9 May, Europe Day, Europe marks the anniversary of a new vision for Europe. The aim was to make war between Europe’s nations unthinkable. Over 50 years later, we celebrate this vision that brought Western Europe an unprecedented period of peace.

The European Union (EU) is Europe’s answer to centuries of war and conflict. At the end of the Second World War most of Europe was destroyed and innumerable lives were ruined. 60 years later, the EU has become a Union of 25 sovereign democratic nations of 450 million citizens. The EU is today the world’s largest trading block and donor of development assistance. This success was possible only because former bitter enemies decided to work together, and pursue a vision of reconciliation, solidarity, democracy and human rights.

While growing into an economic giant, the EU for many years lacked the tools to confront various forms of crisis, violence, terrorism and conflict at our own door step as well as elsewhere. Today the EU commands the necessary financial resources, civilian and military expertise to confront such threats. The EU implements no fewer than 14 crisis management operations with a total of 55.000 European peacekeepers and peace monitors deployed around the globe. The EU is present in places as diverse as Congo, Afghanistan, Georgia and, of course, here in Aceh.

The Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM), then called Initial Monitoring Presence (IMP) arrived in Aceh on the very day of the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Helsinki. AMM’s task is to assist the Government of Indonesia (GoI) and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) in implementing the MoU. The AMM is Europe’s first peace mission in Asia and the first such operation undertaken jointly with ASEAN. European and ASEAN monitors in AMM form an integrated team, pooling their hearts and minds towards a common aim of promoting peace and reconciliation in Aceh.

Today, barely 9 months after the ink dried on the Helsinki MoU, much has been accomplished; all GAM weapons have been decommissioned and the military wing of GAM has been disbanded. In parallel the GoI has relocated non-organic military and police. The AMM has facilitated what hitherto few dared to dream about: peace in Aceh is now all but irreversible. There are still challenges ahead, notably the settling of unresolved amnesty cases. Acehnese are now looking forward to a new law of governance within the fold of the Indonesian nation and hope to soon vote in the first pilkada of the post-conflict era. The AMM remains strongly committed to the peace process and will remain in Aceh until the elections.

## *EU and recovery in Aceh*

The EU is the world's biggest donor, and provides more than half, or €70 billion of the world total development aid every year. Of this, 10% (around 7 billion €) is managed by the European Commission (EC). The EU humanitarian aid is unconditional; the aim is to get help to victims as quickly as possible irrespective of race, religion or the political convictions of their government. The EC is, through several organisations, supporting the rehabilitation and reconstruction in Aceh after the tsunami disaster. The EU is also the largest contributor to the multi donor trust fund for Aceh and Nias – approximately 85% of the funds are made up by contributions from the EU. Furthermore, the EC is promoting economic development, good governance and rule of law in Aceh.

The EU is committed to Aceh - even before the tsunami and the signing of the MoU - and will continue to support the Acehnese people after the reconstruction phase and the peaceful resolution of the conflict. The EC will, after AMM leaves, continue to support the reconciliation process in Aceh including through longer term institutional capacity building, reintegration and police training.

What the EU does best is to use all of its capabilities in a holistic manner in order to provide support at all levels. It focuses not only on reconstruction or decommissioning but also on emergency aid, human rights, reintegration, technical assistance, financial support, capacity building in local governance, health, security and stability. EU assistance is provided in the spirit of peace, solidarity and friendship as we have also been through disasters and now it is our turn to give support where help is needed. This is what Europe really stands for.

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