THE FOCUS OF INDONESIAN DIPLOMACY IN 2022 AND THE DIPLOMATIC ROLE OF THE INDONESIAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Abstract

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Retno Marsudi has conveyed the focus of Indonesian diplomacy in 2022. This focus will serve as a guidance for the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia in exercising its diplomatic role. This paper elaborates the diplomatic challenges that Indonesia will face, and how the Indonesian House of Representatives carries out its diplomatic role in an optimum manner. In 2021, the House of Representatives exercises its diplomatic role by dispatching its delegates to play an active role in various inter-parliamentary cooperation forums. In 2022, Indonesia still faces many challenges in its diplomacy, for example global efforts to tackle the pandemic and global economic recovery; peace and humanitarian issues in various parts of the world; and of course efforts to protect Indonesian citizens, as well as the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. Indonesia’s G20 presidency as well as the position of the House of Representatives as the host of the IPU meeting will create challenges as well as opportunities for Indonesia’s international leadership. In view of these conditions, the House of Representatives must implement the appropriate diplomatic strategy so that every diplomacy step taken by the House of Representatives will result in the maximum support for the Government’s foreign policy.

Introduction

On January 6, 2022, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Retno L.P. Marsudi conveyed the Annual Press Statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (PPTM) for 2022 regarding the achievements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2021 and the focus of diplomatic policies to be implemented in 2022 (www.kemlu.go.id, January 6, 2021). This PPTM will be taken into consideration by Indonesia’s partner countries in managing their cooperation with Indonesia. For the House of Representatives of Indonesia, this PPTM serves as a guideline in exercising the mandated diplomatic role to take part in striving for Indonesia’s national interests in international forums.
Throughout 2021, in view of the focus of the diplomatic policies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the development of inter-parliamentary cooperation worldwide, the House of Representatives dispatched its delegates to various forums to carry out their diplomatic role. They play an active role in striving for Indonesia's national interests, including to contribute to finding solutions to the world problems. The diplomatic activities of the Government and the House of Representative throughout 2021 were greatly influenced by global efforts to tackle the pandemic and efforts to recover various sectors of life affected by the pandemic. Hot issues in the region and worldwide also become the focus of the House of Representatives’ delegates. So, what are the challenges faced by Indonesian diplomacy in 2022? What kind of diplomatic role that can be served by the House of Representatives? This paper will first provide a brief overview of the diplomatic role of the House of Representatives in 2021, after that this paper will briefly describe the challenges that Indonesian diplomacy will face in 2022 and how the House of Representatives will exercise its diplomatic role to support the policies established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Contribution from the House of Representatives’ Diplomacy 2021**

The COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted a significant impact upon every aspect of human life, including the relationship amongst nations. The pandemic has made every nation to become more aware of the importance of global cooperation to strengthen health infrastructure and governance; world economic resilience; and strengthen multilateralism and to put aside rivalry. Whereas for Indonesia, the pandemic has urged the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to shift the focus of diplomatic priorities that have been carried out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2020 until now. The pandemic has created limitations in diplomatic activities and forms an inseparable part of every diplomatic maneuver conducted by the Government and the House of Representatives.

Health diplomacy will be the first focus of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2021, which includes building independence and resilience of national health. Health diplomacy encompasses efforts to ensure the full vaccination at the national level as well as efforts to realize equal access to vaccines for all nations worldwide. The House of Representatives’ delegates are also fighting for the Government's efforts in this sector on various occasions during the inter-parliamentary cooperation forums in 2021. For example, in a series of meetings of the Preparatory Committee 5th World Conference of the Speakers of Parliament (5WCSP), the House of Representatives’ delegates repeatedly voiced the importance of strengthening international cooperation and the principle of multilateralism to tackle the pandemic and all impacts that it has caused. Likewise during meetings at other multilateral and regional forums, such as the General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Asian Parliamentary Assembly, ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, and MIKTA, as well as in bilateral meetings with partner nations.

Efforts to support economic recovery and green/sustainable development will also be one of the focuses of Indonesian diplomacy in 2021. The focus of this economic diplomacy
comprises of efforts to encourage the implementation of the Travel Corridor Arrangement (TCA), efforts to expand market access, and regional economic integration, overcoming numerous trade barriers, including negative campaigns against Indonesia's top commodities, particularly palm oil, and other relevant efforts. The House of Representatives’ delegates are also striving to address this issue, for instance by proposing ideas during various meetings regarding the importance of ensuring that post-pandemic world economic recovery efforts are in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. With regard to the issues concerning palm oil commodities, the House of Representatives’ delegates are also exploring efforts to establish a cooperation concerning palm oil with Turkey.

Although the pandemic has created hardships domestically, Indonesia’s commitment to continue to contribute to addressing various regional and global issues will remain one of the diplomatic focuses of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2021. Issues concerning Women, Peace, and Security, Rohingya, Indo-Pacific cooperation, improvement and protection of human rights, and the issue concerning Palestine remain the main concerns of Indonesia. The limitations of parliamentary diplomatic activities amidst the pandemic do not make the House of Representatives to lose focus on these issues. For instance, during the AIPA General Assembly meeting, the delegates of the House of Representatives encouraged ASEAN to continue to pursue constructive dialogue based on mutual agreements and international law in addressing the South China Sea issue. Together with the parliaments of partner nations, the House of Representatives is also striving to come up with the best solution for the restoration of democracy in Myanmar.

And as a form of support for efforts to achieve an independent, democratic and sovereign Palestinian state, the Indonesian House of Representatives’ Delegates intervened during a debate session on Palestine at the General Assembly Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) which was held in May 2021.

Challenges faced by Indonesian Diplomacy in 2022

In December 2021, Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus again appealed all countries around the world to distribute the COVID-19 vaccines equally and equitably. Tedros said that the limited supply of vaccines to low-income nations had caused 92 countries to fail to achieve the vaccination target of 40 percent of the total population prior the end of 2021. WHO has set a target of 70% total population coverage with COVID-19 vaccines in all countries by mid-2022 (who.int, 29 December 2021). Even though early 2022 recorded the highest number of COVID-19 cases since the first outbreak, Tedros also expressed his optimism that the pandemic will end in 2022 if all countries work together to contain the spread of virus and able to achieve fair and equitable distribution of vaccines.

In view of the above conditions, global efforts to end the pandemic will still greatly affect Indonesian diplomacy in 2022. One of the challenges faced by Indonesian diplomacy in 2022 is to ensure the availability of vaccines to achieve the target of 70% full vaccination of the population by mid-2022, as well as to help ensure the availability of vaccines, medicines, and medical equipment for every country in the world, in
particular for vulnerable countries lacking proper health care facilities. These efforts are still considered as an important part of Indonesia’s diplomacy in 2022, and has been emphasized by the Foreign Minister by designating health diplomacy as the first priority of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2022.

While the pandemic is still far from over, there are still other problems faced by the international community that demand regional or world cooperation in order to find solutions to achieve a stable, peaceful, and prosperous world. Those problems include, among others, peace and humanitarian issues, such as humanitarian issues and democracy in Afghanistan after the Taliban took over control; nuclear proliferation threat; the issue of maintaining peace in the Korean Peninsula; issue regarding sustainable development which is on the decline due to the pandemic; environmental issues and global warming; refugee crisis in many conflict areas; to the issue concerning the independence of the Palestine and various other issues that still require the commitment from the international community cooperation, including Indonesia. In the Indo-Pacific region, Indonesia is still witnessing the struggle for influence between the two world superpowers that may obstruct the efforts to realize a safe, stable, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region. In Southeast Asia, the South China Sea dispute is a huge problem that is still ongoing. This region is also still struggling to address the Rohingya refugee crisis and the restoration of democracy in Myanmar which is a test for the credibility and unity of ASEAN.

As conveyed during PPTM 2022, the focus of Indonesian diplomacy for this year has not changed drastically compared to the last year. In 2022, health diplomacy is still a top priority. Likewise, economic diplomacy to accelerate the economic recovery based on a green and sustainable economy and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals; Indonesian citizen protection diplomacy; sovereign diplomacy which includes accelerating the intensity of negotiations at the borders; and diplomacy to contribute to peace and humanity in the region and globally. Faced with the international dynamic challenges as elaborated above and for which a number of policy focuses have been established, Indonesian diplomacy, either carried out by the Government or the House of Representatives, also faces challenges as well as opportunities to strive for the national interest, namely the G20 Presidency of Indonesia and the position of the Indonesian House of Representatives as the host of the IPU meeting in March 2022.

Indonesia’s G20 presidency will be a crucial challenge in building Indonesia’s profile as an influential international actor. Through the G20 Presidency, Indonesia is expected to bridge the interests of developed, developing and less-developed nations to prevent the inequality from widening. The attenuation of multilateralism in the G20 constitutes one of Indonesia’s biggest challenges in realizing the three priorities of the Indonesian G20 Presidency, namely strengthening the global health architecture; digital transformation; and sustainable energy transitions. The international community will assess leadership of Indonesia in exercising its role as the President of the G20 until November 2022. The G20 presidency will also place Indonesia as the host of the G20 Parliamentary meeting (P20) wherein the Indonesian House of Representatives’ Delegates can play a direct role in supporting the diplomatic measures taken by the Government. Meanwhile,
the Indonesian House of Representatives will also host the 144th IPU Assembly meeting in Bali. The meeting which will be held on 20-24 March 2022 will become a challenge as well as an opportunity for the House of Representatives, as faced by the Government at the G20.

The year 2022 will be an important year for Indonesian diplomacy, either by the government or the House of Representatives. In order to ensure that the diplomatic role of the House of Representatives can contribute optimally to achieve Indonesia's national interests in international forums, and also to contribute optimally to overcome various issues faced by the international community, the House of Representatives needs to establish an excellent diplomacy strategy. A comprehensive study needs to be carried out to map the issues that need to be prioritized by the House of Representatives in conducting the role of parliamentary diplomacy. The strategic position of the DPR delegation in the inter-parliamentary cooperation forum will also determine the capability of the delegates of the House of Representatives to influence the policy directives of the inter-parliamentary cooperation organization. Efforts to pursue these strategic positions also should take into account the diplomatic agenda which is a priority for the Government, so that diplomatic support by the parliament will provide direct benefits to the efforts undertaken by the Government.

Closing

Each and every diplomatic step taken by House of Representatives has an important meaning for achieving the diplomatic policy focus of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the realization of equitable and mutually beneficial international cooperation. Nevertheless, to ensure that every diplomatic step of the House of Representatives will have maximum impact on Indonesia's national interests, an appropriate diplomatic strategy must be implemented, supported by qualified diplomatic capacities and assets. The above explanation describes the challenges and focus of Indonesian diplomacy in 2022, and that 2022 is an important year for Indonesian diplomacy. In this regard, the House of Representatives needs to conduct a comprehensive study on every diplomatic challenge and opportunity to be faced, guided by the diplomatic agenda that becomes the focus of the Government, taking into consideration the global developments, observing the diplomatic policies of each partner country government and parliament, to taking into account the ability of the House of Representatives' delegates to influence every issue, in order to formulate a focused and targeted diplomatic strategy for the House of Representatives.

References

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