



ASIA-EUROPE LECTURE TOUR

“THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OMBUDSMAN INSTITUTION”

JAKARTA - PHNOM PENH – VIENTIANE – HANOI - ULAN BATOR

Prof. Dr. Roel Fernhout

Professor of Law, University of Nijmegen & Former National Ombudsman of the Netherlands

ABSTRACT

After Sweden in 1809 and Finland in 1919, Denmark in 1955 became the third country in the world to acquire an ombudsman. And it was from Denmark that the ombudsman institution gained a footing all over the world. From that point onwards, the institution underwent spectacular growth. At present, more than 100 countries worldwide have ombudsmen at one or more levels of government. Nevertheless, the ombudsman is not wide spread in the Asian region yet, so far only Hong Kong, Macao, South Korea, Thailand and Pakistan have ombudsmen that are also member of the International Ombudsman Institute. In Indonesia an Ombudsman institution exists but is not a member of the International Ombudsman Institute.

Countries undergoing political transition in particular can benefit from the existence and activities of an ombudsman. The presence of an Ombudsman can contribute significantly to the development of young - and sometimes still vulnerable – transitional democracies, and help building public confidence in the government. The speaker will address general characteristics of ombudsmanship as well as challenges that need to be overcome in setting up a new ombudsman institution or improving an existing one. How can be ensured that the ombudsman is able to fulfill his role in the system of checks and balances in an adequate and confident way?

Dr. Fernhout, former National Ombudsman of the Netherlands will tour several cities in Asia to share his experiences and address some of the issues above. The Asia-Europe Lecture Tour is an initiative by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) to bring “leaders of opinion” from each region to tour the opposite region, engaging in debates at up to five institutions - typically think-tanks or universities and NGOs but all of which are open to the public. This series will commence in Jakarta and continue to Phnom Penh, Vientiane, Hanoi, and Ulan Bator.

PROFILE OF SPEAKER



Roel Fernhout was born in The Netherlands on 8 August 1947. He studied Dutch law at Rotterdam’s Erasmus University and received his doctoral degree in 1974. In 1990 he received his Ph.D. from the University of Amsterdam.

On 22nd June 1999 he was appointed National Ombudsman by the Lower House of Parliament. He served one term as National Ombudsman from 1999 till 2005. Before being appointed National Ombudsman, he was Professor of European Migration Law at the Radboud University (Nijmegen, The Netherlands), at which university he is reappointed in 2006.

He was chair of the Dutch section of Amnesty International from 1988 to 1992 and vice-chair from 1982 to 1986. He is a board member of the University Assistance Fund for Refugee students, member of the Human Rights Committee of the Advisory Council on International Affairs of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, member of the Standing Committee of Experts on International Immigration, Refugee and Criminal law (Meijers Committee) Till recently he chaired the jury awarding the Tilburg University “Max van der Stoel human rights prize”.

ABOUT THE ASIA-EUROPE FOUNDATION

The **Asia-Europe Foundation** is mandated by the **Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)**¹ to promote better mutual understanding and closer cooperation between the people of Asia and Europe through greater intellectual, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges. These exchanges include conferences, lecture tours, workshops, seminars and the use of web-based platforms.

ASEF works in partnership with other public institutions and civil society actors to facilitate and encourage dialogue on issues of common concern. This particular Lecture Tour is organised under **the Asia-Europe Democratisation and Justice Series** which provides a platform for Asia-Europe exchanges in the field of democratisation and justice through dialogue between civil society and policymakers, with a particular focus on transitional countries. For more information, please visit: <http://www.asef.org>



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¹ The **Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)** is an informal process of dialogue and cooperation. It brings together Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam, the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Commission. <http://www.aseminfoboard.org>