



## 32nd Asia-Europe Lecture Tour

**"HOW THE EU IS PERCEIVED IN ASIA"  
BY PROF. MARTIN HOLLAND**



### **Remarks by H.E. Julian Wilson Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam**

May I first congratulate the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the National Centre for Research on Europe (NCRE) and Professor Holland on the launch of the second volume of *"The EU Through the Eyes of Asia"*. The new publication serves as a valuable resource for all those committed to pursuing closer relations between the EU and the countries and institutions of Asia.

The EU devotes significant resources to gauging the views of its own citizens, notably through Eurobarometer, which regularly assesses public opinion on the EU issues of the day. Such assessments do not always provide comfortable reading and can accordingly serve as a useful spur for the EU to raise its game and engage better with the people it serves. The publication we are launching today can similarly galvanise us in our efforts to build understanding and engagement between the EU and Asia. Knowing how you are perceived is vital to the success of such an enterprise and I draw several conclusions from this book.

First, there is a stark difference between how the EU is viewed by elites and by the general public. This is well-illustrated by the fact that 43% of the elite representatives questioned identified the EU as the most important partner for Indonesia, whilst barely 9% of ordinary people made the same choice. Whilst international relations should not be about beauty contests between rival powers, this disparity underlines that the EU needs to do more to explain its role and values to a wider audience.

Second, the survey indicated that significant value is placed on the fostering of region-to-region links, with EU-ASEAN dialogue featuring prominently as an issue which impacted on Indonesia. Our links with ASEAN are indeed intensifying and there is huge potential to develop the relationship further.

Third, it remains important that the EU play to its strengths, whilst also nurturing the expanding role with which we have been vested by the Lisbon Treaty reforms, to which I will turn in a moment. The EU's high-profile role in development assistance was readily recognised by many respondents, with the EU rated as the second most important development actor in Indonesia after the UN. The economic and commercial profile of the EU was also recognised.

Fourth, I readily take on board the advice set out in the book to engage more effectively with the Indonesian media in order to disseminate information about the EU, though I draw satisfaction from the conclusion that there was a preponderance of positive, rather than negative, media coverage of EU affairs in Indonesia, in spite of the difficulties – including the air ban – of recent times.

Turning to the far-reaching reforms ushered in by the Lisbon Treaty – which entered into force on 1<sup>st</sup> December – I am convinced that the changes will help the EU to deliver more effectively on the responsibilities falling within its competence at home and abroad and hence to earn greater interest and support from EU citizens and the wider world.

The establishment of a more permanent President of the EU's Council – whose first incumbent is the Prime Minister of Belgium, Herbert Van Rompuy – and the creation of a powerful new High Representative for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy – a post now held by the UK's Baroness Ashton – means that the EU will enjoy clearer and more sustained representation on the world stage, backed up by 130 diplomatic missions across the globe. On key cross-border issues of mutual concern to the EU and Indonesia – including trafficking of people, arms and drugs – the Lisbon Treaty vests the EU with more power to act collectively. The Treaty also paves the way for more efficient and democratic decision-making within the EU, for example through more majority voting in key policy areas and by giving the European Parliament a greater say in EU legislation.

This is all good news for the EU. It is also good news for Indonesia, as it means that this country can count on the EU as a reliable and committed partner, well-placed to take forward issues of mutual interest, including follow-up to the EU-Indonesia Partnership and Co-operation Agreement signed in November.

May I conclude by thanking once more Professor Holland and ASEF for their endeavours and by confirming that the EU Delegation in Jakarta looks forward to digesting – and acting on – the valuable analysis set out in this publication.