

**AUN Executive Director, Choltis Dhirathiti, PhD**  
**Opening Speech at the 18<sup>th</sup> AUN & 7<sup>th</sup> ASEAN+3 Educational Forum and Young Speakers' Contest, at Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia**  
**Wednesday, 2 May 2018**

Prof. Dr. Bambang, Vice Rector of Academic & Student Affairs, Universitas Indonesia;  
Dr. Arman Nefi, Director of Student Affairs, Universitas Indonesia;  
Dr. Indah Widyahening, Head of International Office, Universitas Indonesia;  
Dr. Mohammad Adhitya, Universitas Indonesia;  
Distinguished Guests;  
Ladies and Gentlemen -

First of all, may I welcome you all to this event, the 18<sup>th</sup> AUN and 7<sup>th</sup> ASEAN+3 Educational Forum and Young Speakers' Contest. And, on behalf of the ASEAN University Network, or the AUN, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Universitas Indonesia for the generosity and hospitality extended to all delegates and participants. May I also express my gratitude to the Organizing Committee from the Office of Student Affairs, the International Office and liaison students for the hard work they have put into the preparation of this 3-day event.

I am very delighted to be with you, 67 participants, delegates and observers, from 25 universities of 10 ASEAN and East Asian countries. The AUN and ASEAN+3 Educational Forum and Young Speakers' Contest was initiated to strengthen the role of youth of ASEAN+3 countries by providing the platform to engage talented and knowledgeable students in an academic forum, and to voice out their ideas, concerns and recommendations on the current world issues pertinent to East Asian region. The ASEAN University Network always believes in the power of youth in bringing changes and betterment of our society.

Commitment on youth projects has always been a top priority for the AUN. We have a number of platforms for youth development through academic and non-academic forums and activities. And I am proud to say that after 20 years of continuous engagements and experiences in organizing varieties of youth programs and projects, most of OUR activities have now become the "de facto Models" for other similar activities especially those organized in the Southeast Asian region. We are talking about AUN activities such as Summer School, Study Trip, AUN Experiential Leaders Forum, ASEAN+3 Youth Cultural Forum, and of course, Education Forum and Young Speakers' Contest. For this reason, may I congratulate all the women and men, students and academics, who had joined our Ed Forum and YSC activities in the past, who had a hand in building up and bringing this event into existence and its current strengths and reputations.

Specifically, the *Educational Forum* is a unique platform aimed to enhance youth leadership and engagement in policy dialogue in a simulation of ASEAN Summit setting combined with selected procedures of the UN meeting. At the Forum, youth representatives from ASEAN+3 countries will have a good chance to discuss and negotiate on important issues related to regional current agendas. The results of which will be formalized in a form of *Youth Joint Statement* that manifests the interests of ASEAN and its dialogue partners. On the other hand, the *Young Speakers' Contest* is a platform provided to students with public speaking talent to express their opinions, ideas, and aspirations that would contribute to the development of ASEAN+3 community. Hence, the two activities are important in

empowering youth leadership and engagement and having their voices heard at the policy level for issues relevant to Southeast and East Asian regions.

Through 20 years of trial and error since the start of this event in 1998, I am delighted to say that the AUN and ASEAN+3 Educational Forum and Young Speakers' Contest has been noted by the ASEAN and ASEAN+3 Ministerial level as one of the top and the most successful platforms of youth activities in this region. As a normal practice of the Forum, AUN will submit the *Youth Joint Statement* to the Senior Officials Meeting on Youth or SOMY through the ASEAN Secretariat. The recognition was stepped up last year, when the AUN has been invited and had a privilege to be seated for the first time at the ASEAN and ASEAN+3 Senior Officials Meeting on Youth (SOMY), to present the outcomes of all the youth projects that had been implemented and coordinated under the organization of the AUN. And we have received positive responses from the SOMY focal points, especially from the National Youth Commission of the Philippines and the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security of Thailand, asking for more detailed information of our student events. And this year, SOMY meeting is coincidentally scheduled at the same period as our event on the May 3, in Jakarta. In this regards, I would like to reiterate that the SOMY meeting will definitely be reminded of the outputs of this Forum through the quality recommendations to be collectively produced by YOU - the ASEAN+3 youth representatives, the recommendations which would pile up in the stock of public concerns and opinions in the particular policy issues.

There are several reasons why our event is so special and has become the Model of our regions. Apart from the outputs of this event that I mentioned earlier, the Design of this event is special in that – our Design:

- Maximize students' potentials, knowledge and capabilities; by
- Deploy various modes of thinking in tackling with the main theme of the event; done by
- Putting together each step or activity into the organic, or inter-related, "sequences"; for example, the first round of the YSC stages first, giving the opportunity to Education Forum delegates to listen and "to brew or ferment" their final thoughts on the subject before the start of their formal session; and lastly we
- Use time in an efficient manner with clear expected deliverables.

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope that this event will be memorable, educational, an opportunity for networking; and more importantly, a fun experience for all of you.