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REMARKS

ANTONY J. BLINKEN, SECRETARY OF STATE

FAIRMONT

JAKARTA, INDONESIA

DECEMBER 14, 2021

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SECRETARY BLINKEN: Good afternoon, everyone. So good to see you all. Hello, hello.

So it is, as I've said earlier today, very, very good to be back in Jakarta. I'm grateful to President Jokowi, to Foreign Minister Retno, to the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Makarim, and the government and the people of Indonesia for welcoming us so warmly today.

I'm in Jakarta on the first stop of a three-country tour of Southeast Asia because what happens in this region shapes global events, and because our relationships with countries of Southeast Asia are vital across virtually all of the foreign policy priorities that we have, and that have direct impacts on the lives of our people. And that starts with Indonesia, one of the world's largest democracies, one of the fastest growing economies in the G20, and a strategic partner for the United States.

We've seen Indonesia's global leadership, even in just the past few weeks at the COP26 summit in Glasgow on climate, where Indonesia, one of the world's biggest methane emitters, joined the global methane pledge to collectively cut methane emissions by 30 percent by the end of the

decade; then just this week at the Summit of Democracy, where President Jokowi was the first speaker and pledged Indonesia's support for democracy worldwide; and at the Bali Democracy Forum, which Indonesia has now hosted for 14 years.

We're looking forward to supporting Indonesia as the host of the G20 over the next year, something the foreign minister and I spoke extensively about today, including the priorities that Indonesia has for its presidency.

After President Biden and President Jokowi's very productive meeting a few weeks ago in Glasgow, President Biden asked me to come here to advance our work together on a number of critical issues. That includes stopping the COVID-19 pandemic. The United States has donated more than 25 million vaccines to Indonesia – the latest shipment arriving today, and we're providing \$77 million in pandemic relief assistance, as well.

We're also working with Indonesia to boost a strong post-COVID economic recovery. As I spoke about this morning at the university, at President Biden's direction we're developing a comprehensive Indo-Pacific economic framework that includes trade, the digital economy, technology, resilient supply chains, decarbonization and clean energy, infrastructure investment, worker standards, and other areas of shared interest.

Together our countries will collaborate to fight the climate crisis, to defend democracy, human rights, and the rules-based international order, including in the maritime domain, and to strengthen regional cooperation through institutions like ASEAN, which has its secretariat here in Jakarta.

I spoke this morning at greater length about our commitment to a free and open, interconnected, prosperous, resilient, and secure Indo-Pacific, because we believe these attributes are key to a region where the benefits of economic growth are broadly shared, crises are addressed effectively, people are empowered to chart their own futures, countries work together on the basis of mutual respect, and we preserve the rules-based order that we've built and maintained together for so many years.

And what I want to emphasize is this is not only an American vision. It's one that people and countries across the Indo-Pacific hold, including the Indonesian people, who have worked hard over the decades to strengthen their own democracy, to grow their economy, to play a greater role in regional and global affairs.

Our approach also shares the principles of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, which Indonesia played a leading role in developing and now in implementing. The United States will work closely with Indonesia, other partners and allies, and regional institutions like ASEAN to make the vision real.

Just a short while ago, Foreign Minister Retno and I signed three Memoranda of Understanding, as we call them in the lingo, to bring our countries' work together to another level: first, in maritime cooperation, which includes activities like joint naval exercises, combatting illegal fishing, restoring coral reefs; second, to continue the Peace Corps program that was re-established in 2009 after a 44-year hiatus, and today Indonesians and Americans are working together teaching English, training teachers, learning each other's cultures; and third, to expand our educational ties. Over the years, we've had thousands of Americans and tens of thousands of Indonesians participating in educational leadership exchanges between our countries.

These programs don't only enrich people's lives, they also build lasting connections between our people, especially rising generations.

From here, we'll be talking to young leaders, participants in these exchange programs. Several are alumnae of the programs of the United States. All are making extraordinary contributions to Indonesia's COVID response, which is what we're going to focus on in our conversation.

All of these agreements, these collaborations, these conversations reflect the breadth and strength of ties that connect Indonesia and the United States. And on behalf of the United States, let me say how grateful we are to the Indonesian Government and to the Indonesian people for our long friendship, for an increasingly effective partnership, and our shared commitment to the values and ideals that have made so much progress possible for our own countries, but also for many others across the Indo-Pacific and increasingly around the world.

One more point that I wanted to make before I turn to your questions. Here in Indonesia, we are very fortunate to have a confirmed ambassador on the job, and one of our best ambassadors, Sung Kim. But in too many countries we're still waiting. As of last week, only 16 percent of our ambassadors have been confirmed. At this point in the last three administrations, the number was between 70 and 90 percent. Crucial posts, including Beijing, are still vacant.

This is a huge problem. On virtually every challenge we face, including dealing with Russia, with China, with non-state actors, we're hampered by the fact that we don't have our full national security and foreign policy team on the field. I spoke to Senator Schumer about this last night. I'll keep raising the issue publicly and privately. For the sake of our national security, the Senate must act.

QUESTION: With that, I'm happy to take some questions. Thank you.

MR PRICE: We have time for a few questions. We'll start with Peter Martin of Bloomberg. Peter, one second.

QUESTION: Thanks for doing this. So in your speech this morning you talked about the importance of democracy and of anticorruption, but I guess the next few stops on this trip kind of illustrate some of the difficulties of pursuing that theme in the region. And so I wondered, would the Biden administration welcome the return of Najib in Malaysia if voters pick him next year? And in Thailand, would you encourage pro-democracy groups to keep pressing for the reforms of the monarchy?

And then just finally, I wondered why hasn't the administration's full Indo-Pacific strategy been briefed yet?

SECRETARY BLINKEN: Thank you. We'll have an opportunity in both places to address questions, particularly those places when we're there. I look forward to doing that.

But let me say generally that we see combatting corruption as central to our work and the work of other countries to build and defend resilient democracies. What we see around the world is corruption being extraordinarily corrosive of democracies and, in fact, of stability because if you look at virtually every major social movement of recent years in countries around the world, whether it's Tahrir Square, whether it's the fruit vendor in Tunisia, whether it's the Maidan in Ukraine – and I could go down the list – you typically find that one of the reasons for people standing up and speaking out is a revulsion to corruption in its many forms.

We'll be doing and having more to say about our efforts to combat corruption in the days and weeks ahead, but it is central to our efforts in supporting democracy and in building a more resilient one.

With regard to the strategy, stay tuned. Coming to an inbox near you in the not-too-distant future. But having said that, the remarks that I made this morning I think touched on the main pillars of that strategy. The strategy itself, of course, we'll go into far more detail. But we wanted to begin to talk about the major building blocks of that strategy, and the detail will follow very shortly. Thanks.

MR PRICE: Miss Yara from the Antara News Agency.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, Indonesia has previously expressed its concerns regarding the tension that may rise following the trilateral security cooperation between the United States, the UK, and Australia. How do you respond to Indonesia's concerns, especially in the context of the U.S. relations with Indonesia?

SECRETARY BLINKEN: Thank you. A few things. First, I think it's very important to note that the AUKUS agreement with Australia and with the United Kingdom is additive, complementary to the other arrangements, partnerships, alliances that we have in the Indo-Pacific, as well as beyond. All of these things, whether it is ASEAN, whether it's the Quad, whether it's APEC in a different way, whether it's AUKUS, are complementary to each other.

And a lot of attention has been focused on the aspect of AUKUS that deals with the development of nuclear power, as opposed to nuclear-armed submarines, a distinction that sometimes gets lost. But the agreement involves many more things, including collaboration and cooperation on science and technology, supply chains, cyber, artificial intelligence.

And what we're doing throughout the Indo-Pacific and beyond the Indo-Pacific is building coalitions, building partnerships, where different countries may participate in different arrangements, and then knitting those together in different ways.

For example, AUKUS itself is certainly open to the participation of others, and also to working with other groups of countries, other organizations, other institutions. But all of these share certain basic principles, a certain basic approach to the issues that we have to contend with.

So I think what we have is, again, a focus on how we can most effectively work together with coalitions of countries to meet the challenges that we have before us and actually deal effectively with the issues that are having an impact on the lives of our people.

MR PRICE: Francesco Fontemaggi of AFP.

QUESTION: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I would ask you about Iran. The E3, the Europeans, have said last night that the negotiations in Vienna are basically going nowhere. Do you agree with Liz Truss, as you said on Sunday, that this week, this round of talks is the last chance to save the nuclear deal? And are you prepared to leave the table if there is no progress? And of course, what would be the Plan B, should that happen?

And, if I may, you happen to be in Jakarta at the same time as President Putin's top security advisor. Since you have put a priority on preventing a crisis and a conflict in Ukraine – with Ukraine and Russia, why have you not taken the opportunity to speak with him while here? Thank you.

SECRETARY BLINKEN: Thank you. Two things.

First, with regard to Iran, I would refer you to the statement that I saw published by the E3, by the United Kingdom, Germany, and France, and it made a few points. It said very clearly time is running out, that Iran has still not engaged in real negotiations. Unless there is swift progress, the E3 said, the Iran nuclear agreement will become an empty shell. And what we've seen so far is Iran losing precious time by advancing totally new positions that are inconsistent with a return to the JCPOA.

We continue in this hour, on this day, to pursue diplomacy because it remains, at this moment, the best option. But we are actively engaging with allies and partners on alternatives.

Second, with regard to – apparently, Mr. Patrushev was here. Yes, I noticed his plane on the runway next to ours when we landed. I can't – nor would I – speak to why anyone else might be here and what they're doing.

But I can say that we have a senior State Department official, Assistant Secretary of State Karen Donfried, who is now in Ukraine consulting with our Ukrainian partners. She'll be going on to Moscow to pursue the conversation that President Biden had with President Putin and to test, in particular whether Russia is serious about actually implementing its commitments under the Minsk agreement, which is the diplomatic way to resolve the crisis in eastern Ukraine, and we'll see what results from that. Thank you.

MR PRICE: Thank you very much, everyone.

SECRETARY BLINKEN: All right. Thanks, everyone. See you later.

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