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STATEMENT BY
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FIRST SECRETARY

BEFORE
FOURTH SESSION
OF THE PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES
ON AGENDA ITEM 4 A
ONGOING PRIORITIES AND THEMES:
HUMAN RIGHTS

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New York, 24 May 2005

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Government

Madam Chairperson,

Today, Indonesia is currently undergoing an era of reform. This reform process is driven by the people's desire to correct past mistakes and injustices, by their compelling desire to pursue democratization and uphold the rule of law, and, in every way possible, cleanse Indonesian society of all taints of corruption.

In our reform process, the promotion and protection of human rights is treated as a top priority. In this respect, we are drawing inspiration from our 1945 Constitution which was amended to incorporate all the principles enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Not only have we enacted new human rights legislation as part of this process but we have also strengthened the National Human Rights Commission and established a Human Rights Courts.

Our new human rights law integrates standards and norms contained in various international human rights instruments and also contains provisions guaranteeing the traditional rights of people to land. In addition, the law acknowledges the traditional norms and customs of all ethnicities in the country.

But these changes are taking place not only at the central government level but at the local government level as well. As a result of the decentralization process that is currently being implemented, national changes find their reflection at the local level. Under the current system of public administration, more power is vested in regional governments, allowing each to address any respective regional issue according to values prevailing in that specific region or community. Hence the system recognizes distinct values belonging to certain communities, including minority groups, and fully observes non-discriminatory principles on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, sex and political affiliation.

Madam Chairperson,

This spirit of reform has galvanized the people into exercising their fundamental human rights and freedoms. A culture of responsible democracy is clearly taking root. Because of the comprehensive process of reform, the people have taken their destiny into their own hands and have secured for themselves a legitimate role in the process of national decision-making.

Last year was a watershed in our political history. It vividly demonstrated the new political role of the people. In the period of only six months, we held three national elections -- one parliamentary and two direct presidential elections. It was a massive undertaking. At least, 125 million voters exercised their franchise through 575,000 polling stations on some 6,000 islands of the archipelago. It was a very peaceful democratic exercise. Thus, for the first time in our history, the people directly elected their President and Vice President.

The current reality is that democracy is not only operating at the national level, but it has also diffused itself into public life at the regional,

district, sub-district and even village levels. Laws exist to sustain an appropriate national legal and institutional framework to allow the tender plant of democracy that has begun to take root in Indonesia to grow. This is evident throughout the nation. In all communities, prevailing traditional values are allowed to influence the conduct of local public life, including the election of heads of local governments.

Through the ballot, the Indonesian people have indisputably converted Indonesia into the world's third largest democracy. Hence the Indonesia of today should no longer be measured with the yardstick used in past decades but it must now be assessed in the context of ongoing change and its people's ability to manage the process change for desirable social and political outcomes.

Madam Chairperson,

At this juncture, allow me to touch upon specific points that were raised yesterday by several delegations on issues of concern to my Government. One delegate suggested we re-open the discussion on the decolonialization process for Papua. It is deeply regrettable that such a recommendation should be made while the decolonization process of the said region was legally completed more than three decades ago. So let's not turn the clock back!

On Aceh, Indonesia is very grateful for the unprecedented global humanitarian emergency response in the aftermath of the December 2004 tsunami. With the continued compassionate cooperation and solidarity of the international community, we will be able to move forward. In order to find a peaceful solution to the insurgency in Aceh, the Indonesian Government has and will continue to engage in dialogue and negotiation. We are pleased to report that some progress has been achieved so far. However, to suggest that militarization exists in Aceh is simply misleading and borders on exaggeration. Anyone who witnessed the post-tsunami situation in Aceh would have fully appreciated the constructive role played by military personnel in the affected areas.

On Maluku, the Indonesian Government, through Presidential Decree no. 7 of 2002 and no. 6 of 2003, has been mobilizing people from all walks of life to rebuild that conflict-torn area. This policy focuses, inter alia, on revitalizing the value system and socio-cultural institutions of the area, through a series of relevant programmes.

In closing, Madam Chairperson, we recognize that some may argue for the modesty of our achievements. But let us not turn a blind eye to actual progress that has been achieved so far. Our efforts have resulted in the promotion and protection of human rights for all Indonesian. In addition, Indonesia's practice of democracy has been a blessing to all of its communities.

I thank you Madam Chairperson.