

Closing address given by Ali Sastraamidjojo (Bandung, 24 April 1955)

Caption: In his closing address, given on 24 April 1955, the Indonesian Prime Minister, Ali Sastraamidjojo, claims that the Bandung Conference has been a success.

Source: Asia-Africa speak from Bandung. Djakarta: THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, Republic of Indonesia, 1955. pp. 215-217.

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*Your Highnesses,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen and Friends.*

Having arrived now, after a momentous week, at the close of this Conference, I should like to thank you all for the spirit of goodwill and the willingness to understand you have shown so clearly and continuously during all our fruitful discussions. It was this spirit and this willingness which made it possible to cooperate and arrive at good results, and, if you permit me a personal note, which made it a pleasure for me to be in the chair.

Many of you have just honoured me with your praise for which I am most grateful. I feel, however, that these laurels do not belong to me alone.

There are many who have made great efforts to make this Conference successful. It is difficult to single out persons, committees or groups, but I feel that we are in particular indebted to the other four sponsoring Prime Ministers, the Joint Secretariat, the Chairmen of our Committees and our Rapporteur, to whom we owe so much for preparing this Conference and for the smooth running of its machinery.

As for myself, I have tried to discharge myself of my duties as your President to the best of my abilities by applying the rules of procedure as flexibly as possible.

It may have happened, however, that I did not always succeed in giving everybody the full share to which he deemed himself entitled.

For this I express my regret, which I trust you will accept in the same good spirit of friendship which prevailed during the days we were together and for which I am most grateful.

When on the 18th of April we met at our first session, many of us were strangers to each other. We gathered from all parts of the wide continents of Asia and Africa for the basic purpose, as it was put in the Memorandum of the Five Sponsoring Countries, to become better acquainted with one another's point of view. We had the hope in our hearts that this acquaintance would lead to something more, something of value which would benefit not only the peoples of Asia and Africa, but also the world at large.

There were, however, doubts as well.

Would we really be able, more than one of us must have asked himself, to fulfil our aim by making a real contribution to the promotion of world peace and cooperation? Were we not aiming too high? Would the differences in political, social and cultural outlook amongst such a great diversity of countries not prove to be an insurmountable obstacle to such a contribution, or even to fruitful discussions?

Now, at the end of that same week, we can answer these doubts convincingly. We have not disappointed all those who did put their trust in us. We have made it clear that the peoples of Asia and Africa stand for peace. Before us and before the world is the Joint Communique which we adopted a few minutes ago unanimously.

This document which, I am certain, will take its rightful place in world history, is the result of our labour and exchange of views. It will not be easy for anyone who has not followed our discussions closely to estimate the degree of mutual understanding and good will which was needed to arrive at this result.

It is obvious, however, that it would not have been possible to bring forward a document of this importance voicing the unanimous opinions and resolutions of more than half of the world's population, were it not that the statesmen gathered here are men of peace and wisdom, able and willing to work together in order to give the world genuine peace for which it craves so much.

Moreover, this document would not have come into being if we had not practised amongst ourselves democracy in its best form. During our many discussions we agreed and disagreed, but ultimately we always succeeded in finding a common ground.

Thus our meeting grew to something more and better than a mere conference. We arrived at mutual understanding through an atmosphere of cordiality and frankness. We came to believe in our own ability to make a valuable contribution to world peace, although we viewed our common aims from different angles.

If I call our Joint Communique a historic document it is because we may expect that our opinion will carry weight not only in our continents but even more so over the whole world.

I should therefore like to emphasize that in drafting our recommendations and decisions we never restricted ourselves to the sole interest of our own countries but endeavoured to put the problem in a wider frame, asking ourselves how to reduce world-tension.

I most sincerely hope that when the rest of the world is taking due notice of our decisions they will do so in the same spirit of goodwill, tolerance, forbearance and wisdom as was so admirably displayed during this Conference.

Not merely political problems had our attention. Your Joint Communique gives proof that we devoted much of our limited time to economic and cultural issues and agreed wherever we could find common ground.

Upon returning to your homes and countries I am certain that all will carry with you the same gratifying feelings which are mine at the close of the first Asian-African Conference. We the peoples of Asia and Africa have shown that we can cooperate and that it is peace and peace above all which we want for the benefit of our peoples and the whole world. We have gained much for ourselves and for millions of others during our gathering.

There have been many friendships formed during these days, many useful contacts have been made. We now know amongst ourselves that we want to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours as the only sure and real basis on which mankind can prosper.

May we continue on the way we have taken together and may the Bandung Conference stay as a beacon guiding the future progress of Asia and Africa!