**Article**

**ASEAN Centrality, What Does It Mean?**

ASEAN leadership is needed to respond the current world situation, especially in the political and security fields, with the emergence of the Russo-Ukrainian War, the South China Sea tension, and the crisis in Myanmar. On the other hand, ASEAN is facing challenges in the political and economic rivalry between the United States (US) and China and the post-pandemic economic recovery.

ASEAN needs to manage the issues properly to encourage and enhance cooperation and peace in the region. Reflecting on its initial formation, ASEAN must continue to develop as an effective organization and have a bigger role as a locomotive for stability and peace in the Southeast Asian region.

Indonesia, as the Chair of ASEAN in 2023, is required to optimize ASEAN's central role by making ASEAN part of the solution to creating peace in the region. Indonesia must be able to make effective dialogue fora, such as ASEAN+3, ASEAN Regional Forum, or the East Asia Summit to maintain ASEAN's relevance and capacity in managing the competition of major countries in the region.

Article 1.15 of the ASEAN Charter clearly states that ASEAN's main objective is to maintain ASEAN's centrality and proactive role as the main driving force for its relations and cooperation with external partners in an open, transparent, and inclusive regional architecture. At the ASEAN Summit in Hanoi in 2010, “centrality" was even defined as a regional architecture based on a framework that supports and strengthens each other, with ASEAN as the main driving force.

ASEAN centrality should emphasize on a self-centered system development. The ASEAN centrality concept, as stated in the ASEAN Outlook on The Indo-Pacific, broadly emphasizes that ASEAN must become the dominant regional platform to overcome common challenges and engage with external powers.

As Chair of ASEAN for the fourth time, after 1976, 2003, and 2011, Indonesia needs to reaffirm the concept of ASEAN's centrality so that it is not threatened by the interests and competition of major countries in the region. The strengthening of ASEAN centrality is a non-negotiable condition so that ASEAN continues to maintain its identity as the guardian of stability and peace for its member countries and the Indo-Pacific region. The principle of Indonesia's free-active foreign policy will provide an opportunity to optimize ASEAN's central role in the region. (AW/FW)

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**#ASEANEpicentrumofGrowth**

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