

Indonesian President Calls for Action on Food Security

27 January 2011

- The next economic war could be over rising food prices and poverty
 - Global economic recovery remains uneven
 - More actions needed for sustainable, balanced growth
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Davos, Switzerland, 27 January 2011 – Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono warned today that the next economic war could be over scarce resources if problems of rising food prices, poverty and population growth remain unresolved.

Addressing participants at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, Yudhoyono noted recent increases in food and energy prices, citing FAO predictions that food prices have reached 2008 levels and could still go up. High food prices have an impact on inflation and on poverty and unrest, and could lead to social and political unrest, he said.

Meanwhile, world population is reaching 7 billion this year and could top 9 billion by 2045. “Over half are in Asia. Imagine the pressure on food, energy, water and resources,” Yudhoyono pointed out, adding, “the next economic war or conflict can be over the race for scarce resources, if we don’t manage it together.”

The president of the world’s third largest democracy described the post-crisis recovery as “sluggish and uneven,” citing continued concerns over European sovereign debt, fiscal deficits and the restructuring of the financial sector. In particular, rising unemployment could increase domestic tensions and reignite protectionism. “We have some distance to go and much to do to reach our common objective of strong, sustainable and balanced growth,” he stressed. Yudhoyono saw major strategic shifts in the new world reality.

One of these shifts is the rise of emerging economies, most of which are in Asia. By one estimate, the region will account for 45% of the world’s total GDP and one-third of world trade by the end of this decade. “I will let the pundits debate whether we are on the threshold of an ‘Asian Century’. Whatever you call it, one thing is indisputable: Asia is undergoing a rapid and strong economic, social, cultural and strategic resurgence – the sum of which is certain to redefine global affairs,” he said.

He also warned against complacency in tackling security issues. This is because old conflicts and flashpoints persist and non-traditional security threats are gaining centre stage. Diseases, natural disasters and terrorism continue to kill millions and rack up losses. “The bomb at the Russian airport three days ago reminded us that terrorism will continue to haunt us,” Yudhoyono said.

The president added that in the new reality, no single power can shape the world order alone. “To resolve the issues of our time, nations must come to common terms and find shared norms. The concerted efforts by G20 countries to avert the Great Depression in 2008 and 2009 attest to this,” he said.

Notes to Editors

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