



7th Interfaith Dialogue

Religion in Colonization and Decolonization Indonesian-Dutch Confrontation, Confirmation, Transformation The Hague, June 9th 2022

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Introduction

The 7th Interfaith Dialogue was a collaborative work of the Indonesian government and the Netherlands-Indonesia Consortium for Muslim-Christian Relations (NICMCR). Before and after the meeting, the Consortium has been working relentlessly to bring together schools and NGOs in the Netherlands and Indonesia to think about how Muslim-Christian relations in the two countries can be made progress for the sake of the betterment of the societies.

The Dialogue called for bringing the people together regardless of the construction of race and beliefs and building trust based on equality and justice while aiming for people to share common perspectives in the right way towards the promotion of mutual tolerance and understanding.

The 7th Interfaith Dialogue took place on 9th of June 2022 under the aegis and warm hospitality of the De Kloosterkerk in The Hague - The Netherlands. Over 154 participants attended, both online and in-person, in this 7th Interfaith Dialogue, including intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, religious leaders, academics and experts as well as civil society actors. In addition to this wide range of stakeholders, this Dialogue brought together persons belonging to different religious organizations who are actively engaged in the advocacy and promotion of interfaith dialogue.

This Summary of Discussion does not provide the full details of all presentations that were made during the Dialogue's proceedings. The consolidated list of speakers and agenda are enclosed. Where available, other relevant materials can be found on the website of the Netherlands-Indonesia Consortium for Muslim-Christian Relations (NICMCR) at <https://nicmcr.org/upcoming-events/> and the video streaming can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Drax6O2fMjk>

Format

To help focus the discussions and ensure that they would be highly interactive, each speaker was introduced and made their presentations before the Dialogue and thereafter heard interventions from other participants.

Highest appreciation and distinct accolade were conveyed to Ms. Ambar Sari Dewi (Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga) for anchoring the Dialogue and for the moderators, namely: Mr. Roberto Setio (Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana) and Ms. Janneke Stegeman (Dutch Theologian) with their style and their own ideas of explanation of everything. This occasion mentioned its deepest sense of appreciation and hearty thanks to all the volunteers because of whom this function was made possible.

Opening Session

The Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia, H.E. Ambassador Mayerfas, welcomed the participants of the 7th Interfaith Dialogue. He highlighted that interfaith dialogue has been an integral part of Indonesian diplomacy. He underlined the uniqueness of the Interfaith Dialogue between Indonesia and the Netherlands that has evolved from the bilateral setting into the involvement of the non-state actors through the NICMCR. He was hopeful that the 7th and the future interfaith dialogues will continue to be relevant in corresponding to the issues and challenges in Indonesia and the Netherlands, including in the issue of decolonization in which both countries shared their history.

The Ambassador and Special Envoy for Religion and Belief of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, H.E. Ambassador Jos Douma, shared, among others, the Netherlands' core value of exercising individual's freedom not only on the freedom of religion and beliefs per se but also to promote the nexus between religion and diplomacy. He enlightened the participants about the concept of Indonesia's Pancasila which promotes tolerance and serves the purpose as an instrumental role of building a diverse and inclusive nation. He also highlighted in emulating Indonesia's Pancasila by way of listening to each other and being tolerant to characteristics of other beliefs and religions.

The member of the Steering Committee of the Netherlands - Indonesia Consortium for Muslim - Christian Relations (NICMCR), Ms. Corrie van der Ven, welcomed the participants, on behalf of the Consortium. She explained the activities of the Consortium and the involvement of a number of Indonesian organizations that have become part of the Consortium. She highlighted that both peoples of the Netherlands and Indonesians must have a common understanding to build a shared future. She expressed hope that the Consortium's activities would contribute to a harmonious community and society amongst two peoples.

Rev. Rienk Lanooy of Kloosterkerk, shared historical relevance of Kloosterk and the important role Kloosterkerk played, politically and religiously in settling differences. Kloosterk has become a part of social and political development since the course of the Netherlands' rich history.

Highlights from the Presentations

Dr. Gerry van Klinken, Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde presented (online) the anthropological concept of religion since time immemorial and how the definition of religion itself has transformed from one age to another. He then highlighted that in the event that religion becomes authoritative in its social order, religion has brought wars and conflicts from the time of the age of the Roman Empire until the present time.

Referring to the decolonization, he emphasized that the 1945 revolution is a gigantic act of inclusion and it resisted Dutch colonization in the name of a free and democratic republic. Revolution did not come from external moral ideology but it came from inner heroism. He believed that religion has contributed to a greater connectedness among people, who are seeking freedom but only when it is remembered, original, universal, inward, and under the inspiration of connectedness.

Dr. Welmoet Boender of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam presented that there is still much work to do at Western European universities as well as for politics and societies. She suggested affirmative actions for which (a) students must be made aware of a persistent blind spot for religion in the study of the history of colonization and decolonization; (b) students should be aware of the legitimizing role of theology in the colonial past but also in the present; and (c) students must be trained to critically reflect on this past and present. She expressed hope to train students with a critical reflective, harmonically and dialogical attitude with skills and knowledge of the past and learn to work with problematic legacies.

Lies Marcoes MA, Yayasan Rumah Kita Bersama stressed (online) the importance of looking into the role religious traditions and convictions play in various social problems. In line with this, the role of the government should also be considered; not only is the government responsible for such social problems, but also it can direct religious institutions and actors to participate in overcoming the problems.

Dr. Nur Ichwan, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta presented "Decolonizing Governance of Religion in the Context of Indonesia". He underlined that decolonization did not begin from Indonesia's declaration of independence but it already started from the struggle and resistance of the native people against the colonial government at those moments, personally coined as pre-independence decolonization.

He called for a need for further decolonization but equally highlighted that decolonization should not be the goal of itself but should be one of many factors to create an autonomous nation and to create a more just and compassionate interreligious life: “to be religious is to be inter-religious”.

Prof. Al Makin, Rector of the Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga of Yogyakarta presented “Post-Colonial Education”. He underlined that post-colonial education should become a term of opportunity to return to pre-colonial traditions in Indonesia and is an opportunity to reinvent, re-create and unearth Indonesia’s hidden treasure. Post-colonial education should not become an expression of traumatic experience or a jargon. He expressed his wish to retain the older tradition but should also welcome new innovation, at the same time, to also be critical of its own tradition.

Rev. Karin van den Broeke, Chief Program Officer Kerk in Actie of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands presented “Overcoming Colonialism and Overcoming Racism Mean Liberation for Mankind”. She stressed that colonialism manifests itself in many ways, especially in the form of racism and it influences many aspects of life both of formerly colonized as well as formerly colonizers. Looking at the Dutch Christian perspective on a shared history, she suggested a variety of positive signs, namely: (a) an increasing awareness that wealth in the Netherlands is built on the history of slavery; and (b) a growing acknowledgement of a deeply rooted consequence of colonialism.

She however underlined that there are still many Dutch people that are not aware of the perspectives of people from former colonized countries and that they know a little bit of a shared history and dream about a shared future. However, it did not really share time to hear experiences and life stories of people from former colonized countries that makes them aware of the wounds of history and the efforts up until now. She stressed that overcoming colonialism is a liberation to all and a post-colonial future strengthens the esteem of all people involved. She highlighted the importance of bringing people together and building trust based on equality and justice while aiming for people to share common perspectives in the right way.

The Coordinating-Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, H.E. Minister Mahfud MD, in his keynote speech conveyed his appreciation for the kind invitation and warm hospitality extended by the organizing committee. He noted that dialogue is important in building mutual trust and understanding. As for the 7th Interfaith Dialogue, he stressed the relevance and importance of the theme to address narrative and value historical facts.

He highlighted the religious community especially in Indonesia during the Dutch colonization and their roles of liberating Indonesia to independence and how their roles became more prominent. He also pointed out that such a role was an important component for nation building in order to reach a goal for an equal and prosperous Indonesian society.

He quoted by way of saying that “Religious dialogue heals trauma and provides inclusivity and tolerance”. He expressed hope that such undertaking would lead to more understanding and tolerance.

Dr. Kor Grit, Independent Researcher and teacher in religions at a secondary school discussed (online) the ethical policy and collaboration between the government and religious mission society and how it legitimized such action through the use of international development as part of their aid development specially to colonized countries. In looking to decolonize religion, he suggested looking at colonial policy against a marginalist approach and to rethink about the relation between the state and the church.

PhD student Maria Ingrid Nabubhoga of the Radboud University Nijmegen discussed the discourse of Indonesian immigrants on religion and modernity in the Netherlands. On the one hand, Indonesians described the Netherlands and Dutch people as “very secular” and “super liberal”. On the other hand, Indonesians described the Dutch as adhering to “religious”, “universal” and, for Indonesian Muslims, “Islamic,” values which are embedded in Dutch “institutions”, “policies” and “attitude”.

The concept of religion that Indonesian immigrants know from Indonesia is the concept of religion that was constructed by the Dutch during the colonial era. This concept of religion is no longer taken for granted in the Netherlands, and it is also increasingly contested in Indonesia. Thus, the underlying question is what is religion? What religion are we talking about?

Dr. Mufti Ali, Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin in Banten talked (online) about Christian missionaries in Banten 1854 - 1945 and the response of the Bantense people. He narrated the historical development of Christianity in Banten and recounted the introduction and creation of Christian institutions and the spread of religious literature.

He also narrated that the Bantenese on the other hand, particularly the Sultanate, allowed the practice of free market and also allowed the spread of religious preaching as long as religious conversion is not practiced. However, such a pledge was not heeded and as such led to warring factions and also violent disputes and incidents. There was a deep division among the local populace. He asked for rectifying historical facts with the Netherlands based on historical records to affirm and confirm underlying Indonesian history.

Dr. Sahiron Syamsuddin, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga paid tribute to Karel Steenbrink and his works. He narrated that the translation and interpretation of the Quran by non-believers has been done for centuries. He also discussed the work of Karel Steenbrink, its method, structure and interpretation. In the end, he concluded and praised Karel Steenbrink for his work as being balanced.

Given the entanglements of Dutch colonial control in Indonesia with Dutch Protestant Christian institutions and theologies, it is crucial for Dutch Protestants Churches, theologians and theological educators to gain insight in these colonial Christian entanglements and how they are still of influence today.

Suggested Points of Recommendation

- Develop an eye on the critical part of the history, being aware and impartial but should not leave it as it is. It is not enough to understand the past but also how to move forward because it is a question of influence on how we charter the future while being aware of how religion impacted and shaped the society in the past.
- Enlarge the social circle and share to more people for everyone to be more aware on the benefits of what it means to understand each other, be more tolerant and build a common narrative with different perspectives.

SIDE EVENT

TRIBUTE to Karel Steenbrink

Freek Bakker, Universiteit Utrecht (retired)

Karel Steenbrink was an authority on Christianity and Islam in Indonesia, an engaged scholar and an ardent proponent of Christian-Muslim relations.

Steenbrink proved himself to be a versatile scholar and prolific writer. He lectured at a range of universities, both within the Netherlands and abroad and published numerous books and articles. With publications such as *Dutch colonialism and Indonesian Islam*, his trilogy *Catholics in Indonesia. A documented history* and *A history of Christianity in Indonesia* which he co-edited with Jan Sihar Aritonang, Steenbrink established himself as one of the foremost specialists on the history of Christianity in Indonesia. Steenbrink's expertise on and commitment to Indonesia was publicly recognized when in October 2019 he received the Anugrah Kebudayaan decoration from the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture for his contributions to the intellectual development of Indonesian lecturers of Islam and for his scholarly work on Indonesia.

Agenda
7th Interfaith Dialogue
Indonesia and the Netherlands

**Theme: "Religion in Colonization and Decolonization.
Indonesian-Dutch Confrontation, Confirmation, Transformation".**

Den Haag, 9th June 2022

- 12.30 – 13.30 LUNCH
*Joint Indonesian lunch with the participants of the PCI NU Belanda
3rd Biennial International Conference (registration needed)*
- 13.30 – 13.35 WELCOME
Ambar Sari Dewi, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga,
Yogyakarta
- 13.35 – 14.00 OPENING SPEECHES
Mayerfas, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to the
Netherlands
Jos Douma, Ambassador, Special Envoy for Religion and Belief, the
Netherlands
Corrie van der Ven, Netherlands-Indonesia Consortium for Muslim-
Christian Relations
Rev. Rienk Lanooy, Kloosterkerk
- 14.00 – 15.20 DIALOGUE – 1
Moderator: Robert Setio and Janneke Stegeman

Gerry van Klinken, Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en
Volkenkunde (online)
Welmoet Boender, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Moch Nur Ichwan, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga,
Yogyakarta
Karin van den Broeke, Protestant Church in the Netherlands
Lies Marcoes, Yayasan Rumah Kita Bersama (online)
Al Makin, Rector Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga,
Yogyakarta (online)

Discussion with Audience
- 15.20 – 15.35 TRIBUTE to Karel Steenbrink
Freek Bakker, Universiteit Utrecht retired

15.35 – 15.55 BREAK with refreshments

15.55 – 16.10 KEY-NOTE SPEECH

Mahfud MD, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs of Indonesia

16.10 – 17.10 DIALOGUE – 2

Moderator: Robert Setio, Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana, Yogyakarta

Bekti Lantong, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Manado

Maria Ingrid Nabubhoga, Radboud University Nijmegen

Kor Grit, Kerk in Actie (online)

Mufti Ali, Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten (online)

Discussion with audience

17.10 – 17.20 Short Break

17.20 – 17.30 CLOSING STATEMENT