

## **Conflict Prevention and Resolution Forum**

*“Progress towards peace in Aceh...but what about Indonesia?”*

May 9, 2006

The May CPRF examined the challenges and possible paths to peace in Papua, Indonesia. Speakers were Dr. Blair King, Senior Program Manager for Asia at the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs; Arko Budiadi, First Secretary in the Political Division at the Embassy of Indonesia; Brian McFeeters, Deputy Director of the State Department's Office of Maritime Southeast Asia; and Father Neles Tebay, a West Papuan journalist and priest.

The speakers compared and contrasted the situation in Aceh with that of Papua and noted that the difference in the two conflicts will require a unique approach to finding peace. While the Tsunami acted as a catalyst for peace in Aceh, Papua has no such catalyst. Furthermore, the Papuan Movement is unlike the Free Aceh Movement as there is less violence and limited pressure on the Indonesian government to take action. Another difference is that there are ethnic and religious differences between Papuans and Indonesians, which are not present in Aceh. Lastly, there is a history of UN involvement in Papua whereas there has been no formal UN involvement in Aceh. The speakers noted the profound lack of distrust that exists and made numerous policy recommendations to help further peace in Papua.

Dr. Blair King spoke specifically about his recent report “Peace in Papua: Widening a Window of Opportunity.” He emphasized that the conflict is not intractable and that progress towards peace can be made. King recommended measures to alleviate the distrust between Papuans and the Indonesian Government and to increase transparency of both sides. He pointed out that it is critical to allow the press and diplomats into the region. King also advocated for improved socio-economic management, as Papuans are the poorest people in Indonesia despite having the richest area of natural resources. He recommends full implementation of the special autonomous region, a committed action to end corruption and a trust fund that would help manage the funds that Papua will receive for the next 15 years because of the Special Autonomy Act. King noted that the funds could be used to build infrastructure, education, and social welfare programs.

Arko Budiadi spoke about progress in Indonesia including the increased presence of civil society and free press. Budiadi also acknowledged the improvement of social welfare, pointing to numerous statistics that show how social welfare programs have helped the quality of life for Papuans and Indonesians. In addition to the progress made, Mr. Budiadi spoke of the challenges Indonesia faces as a new democracy, such as lack of good governance and corruption. Budiadi recommended a series of confidence building measures including the disarmament of the Papuan militia, steps to ensure the security and dignity of West Papuans, including addressing human rights violations, and military reform in Indonesia.

Father Neles Tebay spoke from his own personal experiences dealing with the situation in Papua and gave recommendations as to how dialogues could be opened and improved. He emphasized

the need to focus on smaller topics first and then gradually moving to larger, more volatile issues. Tebay believes it is vital to provide a medium for all Papuans to express their concerns, grievances and recommendations for helping to solve the situation. He proposed a dialogue process with three steps. The first step would be a dialogue amongst Papuans about the major issues and possible solutions, facilitated by the Majelis Rakyat Papua (MRP). The second would be a dialogue with Papuans in the area and overseas, facilitated by the MRP. The third step would be a joint dialogue between the Indonesian Government and Papuan parties addressing all grievances and way to solve them. Tebay suggested a potential role for the U.S. Government as a facilitator or mediator in the conflict, a role it has previously played elsewhere in Indonesia.

While Brian McFeeters significantly contributed to the forum, his comments were made off the record. The forum ended on an optimistic note with the recognition by Dr. King that there were many points of agreement amongst the speakers, both in their view of the situation in Papua and in their recommendations for peace. The Sponsors of the Conflict Prevention and Resolution Forum agreed to host a follow up forum on Papua in the next year, to look at progress towards peace, specifically the recommendations made by the speakers.