

**Ambassador Hachigian Remarks**  
**Launch of the 2015-2016 Fulbright U.S.-ASEAN Visiting Scholars**  
**9:30 AM, Tuesday, September 1, 2015**  
**ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, Indonesia**

Thank you Your Excellency Deputy Secretary General Hirubalan and the hardworking ASEAN Secretariat staff for co-hosting the launch of the third class of Fulbright U.S.-ASEAN Visiting Scholars.

It is my great pleasure to be here with you this morning. My deep congratulations and a warm welcome to our 2015-2016 scholars.

You have been accepted into the United States Government's most prestigious academic exchange. You are joining DSG Hirubalan and more than 360,000 "Fulbrighters" who have joined the program since its inception nearly 70 years ago. This includes the seven alumni from the U.S.-ASEAN program who are here today. Welcome alumni.

Congratulations, again, to you all, for earning this impressive distinction.

I'd like to share a snippet of the history of the Fulbright Program with you because you might find it inspiring. What started out as an idea from a young, first term senator from the humble state of Arkansas has grown into the world's most recognized scholarship.

In 1945, three months after the end of the devastating and destructive Second World War, William Fulbright had a unique idea. He introduced a bill in the U.S. Congress to fund the "promotion of international good will through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture and science." He proposed paying for this new program using the proceeds from the sales of surplus war property. One year later, President Harry S. Truman signed the Fulbright Act into law.

Today the Fulbright Program works with universities, government agencies, and international organizations like ASEAN, actively seeking out individuals of achievement and potential through open, merit-based competitions.

The program connects people, connects nations, and connects the world. Many Fulbright Scholars have gone on to make important contributions to humanity. They have won a total of 53 Nobel and 80 Pulitzer Prizes. 30 Fulbright Alumni have served as heads of state or government. Here in Indonesia, two former Foreign Ministers and one former Minister of Defense, as well as Rectors of six prominent universities were Fulbright alumni. And of course, our esteemed alumnus, DSG Hirubalan of Singapore serves here at the ASEAN Secretariat. Simply speaking, he is in charge of Peace, and there is no more important endeavor.

Suffice to say, our ten new members join an impressive collection of alumni scholars and leaders. We hope you are very proud of this honor. We are certainly proud of you.

The *U.S.-ASEAN Fulbright Visiting Scholars* program specifically aims to increase regional understanding and collaboration. We partner with ASEAN to further our mutual goals of a people-centered region.

The program compliments the aims and purposes set out in the ASEAN Declaration, “to accelerate the economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region through joint endeavors in the spirit of equality and partnership in order to strengthen the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful community of Southeast Asian Nations.”

Senator Fulbright saw a similar purpose for his exchange program, saying “the Fulbright Program aims to bring a little more knowledge, a little more reason, and a little more compassion into world affairs and thereby increase the chance that nations will learn at last to live in peace and friendship.”

You can see why we think the Fulbright U.S.-ASEAN Visiting Scholars Initiative is a perfect collaboration!

It is now in its third year. In the first two years, we awarded sixteen scholarships to academics representing all ten ASEAN Member States to study in the U.S. But this is the first year that all ten member states are represented together in one class.

This is one of the many reasons we wanted to host this launch here – in Jakarta, home to the ASEAN Secretariat. When President Obama was first elected, he saw then what I see, that ASEAN is a regional powerhouse, 10 countries strong, representing well over 600 million people, and he stepped up our engagement with ASEAN.

ASEAN is vital because ASEAN has helped keep the peace among this vibrant, diverse community of nations for nearly 50 years. That foundation of peace has allowed economies to grow and lift hundreds of millions out of poverty.

Southeast Asia now faces a host of “21<sup>st</sup> century” challenges - challenges which do not recognize national borders. And because they don’t, we all need to work together. ASEAN seeks to make progress on these, the toughest and most important issues facing humanity– from equitable economic growth to climate change to human trafficking and everything in between.

This year’s Fulbright U.S.-ASEAN Visiting Scholars research topics also transcend national borders. They include sustainable development, renewable energy and human rights.

We are excited that today brings our new scholars together with some of our alumni. We want the scholars to meet, connect and build relationships among each other and with technical experts who are working here at the ASEAN Secretariat and in the field. Whether you study entomology, economic regulation, or engineering, your work has the potential to help ASEAN.

While you are in the United States, I encourage you to consider a regional approach and share your insights when you return. Your research topics connect to challenges faced not just by your home country, but the region. You need look no farther than one of our alumni for an example of how your research can contribute.

One of our first scholars is here with us today from Brunei, Mrs. Siti Salwah Saim, who did her Fulbright research on climate change and disaster preparedness. Her research was featured at the United Nations Climate Summit in New York last year because it addresses a challenge that affects the region and the world. It is not an exaggeration to say Siti has contributed to decision making at the highest levels of government. This is exactly the result we envisioned when the program launched in 2013. We look forward to hearing about more successes from our new scholars, as well as our alumni, as you progress in your careers.

We hope today's event will help build connections. Because beyond academic research, the Fulbright program fosters people-to-people connections within ASEAN as well as between ASEAN and the United States.

With this scholarship, you will be ambassadors for ASEAN and join a broader community of ASEAN leaders who inspire ASEAN citizens to think critically about shared challenges across the region.

I have observed over and over in my life, one person can make a difference. You can make a difference. Remember Senator Fulbright. He was only 40 when he introduced the Fulbright Act but, some 70 years later, he has changed your life. He could not have known then that his idea would lead to us all being together in Jakarta at the ASEAN Secretariat today.

Like Senator Fulbright, you may not always have clear evidence of how your work will eventually make an impact, but trust that it does. Trust in yourself. Trust the work. In conclusion, I want to thank the ASEAN Secretariat's Education, Youth and Training Division for their collaboration not only on today's event but also in developing and promoting the Fulbright U.S.-ASEAN Visiting Scholars Initiative. Let me also thank my staff for their fine work and for their passion.

To our new Scholars, as you begin your tour in the United States, we wish you each a productive and fun experience, and look forward to hearing from you during your journey and beyond. I am counting on you to continue the success of the Fulbright U.S.-ASEAN Visiting Scholars Initiative.

Please keep in touch!

Thank you.