

Forum Aims to Promote Peace Movement

By Sri Wahyuni, The Jakarta Post, 30 June 30 2010

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/06/30/forum-aims-promote-peace-movement.html>

The three-day World Peace Forum (WPF), set to open in Yogyakarta on Wednesday, aims to evolve into a peace movement involving all, a Muslim organization leader says.

Din Syamsuddin, chairman of the country's largest modernist Muslim organization, Muhammadiyah said that by design, this year's forum would have a practical element as well as a fundamental philosophical message. "This time we will talk about possible policies to be implemented both by the governments and civil society elements and networking for a more concrete, collective effort by all the stakeholders," Din told The Jakarta Post.

The forum is held in conjunction with Muhammadiyah's centennial congress, which kicks off this weekend in the same city.

One hundred world figures of different faiths and backgrounds from 30 countries are to join the biennial forum jointly organized by Muhammadiyah and the Center for Dialogs and Cooperation among Civilization.

With "mainstreaming peace education" as its central theme, Din said this year's forum wanted to talk about more practical things and considered education as a strategic element in the creation of peace.

"The success of creating peace also depends on the existence of the culture of peace among all of the world nations," he said.

Held for the first time in Jakarta in 2006, the forum brings together religious leaders, political leaders, intellectuals and media to sit at the same table and talk about solving conflicts and maintaining peace.

"What we have is not just acts of terrorism or wars but the multidimensional aspects of the absence of peace such as poverty, illiteracy, injustice, discrimination and ecological collapse that have been destroying civilization," Din said.

The forum, he added, followed the concept that peace talks should not be one-sided and segmented, but rather require a multi-dimensional approach. "For Muhammadiyah, this is an implementation of the awareness that human beings are God's vicegerent," he said.

Islam, he said, was a religion of peace, love and mercy, and that it was because of this that Muhammadiyah first held the forum in 2006.

"Muslims and Islam have to be able to help create a peaceful and just world," he said.

The fact that Muhammadiyah has often been involved in conflict resolution efforts in the country and engaged in peace talks in the region, such as in southern Thailand and in the Philippines, further strengthened the initiative, he said.

“It’s also because of this experience that Muhammadiyah has decided to start implementing peace education in its educational institutions as an integrated part of the existing subjects, based on the Islamic principle of peace, love and mercy.”

As an interfaith and intercultural dialogue forum, he said, the WPF was very influential. “Bringing together all the stakeholders or investors of peace in a forum to sit together and talk about shared problems is already something,” he said. “And [it would mean more] if the forum really results in something.”

Din said the WPF encouraged the use of dialog rooted in sincerity, honesty, openness and frankness in problem solving.

“This is not an academic seminar or conference that uses a theoretical academic approach but more a medium for sharing and exchanging values, ideas and experiences in the search for a lesson learned. That is why it has a practical dimension,” he said.

“Everyone in the forum therefore is expected to speak freely, openly and frankly so that we will be able to come up with a solution for every problem that we face,” he added.

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/06/30/forum-aims-promote-peace-movement.html>