



## Australian Embassy, Jakarta

# MEDIA RELEASE

16 March 2012

### **Australia welcomes Interfaith Dialogue Action Plan**

Australia's multi-faith delegation to the 6<sup>th</sup> Regional Interfaith Dialogue in Semarang, 11-15 March, welcomed the release of the Plan of Action to promote greater awareness and mutual understanding of faiths in the region.

Australian delegation leader Mr Tim Fischer AC, former Deputy Prime Minister of Australia and former Australian Ambassador to the Holy See, at the opening session of the Dialogue said, "I am pleased to see the Regional Interfaith Dialogue return to its roots, to Indonesia, and especially to this unique setting of Semarang, a place of many faiths and cultures. We are promoting dialogue, of course, but equally encouraging and inspiring our community members to take action in their own communities, in cooperation with the wider region."

This year's theme was "Strengthening Collaborative Communities to Promote Regional Peace and Security: Interfaith in Action". Delegates shared their experiences of promoting interfaith dialogue and discussed concrete programs and cooperative activities which could be taken forward under a Plan of Action.

The Plan of Action includes activities to increase awareness and understanding of religions and faith traditions in the region through active engagement by civil society organisations with the youth, schools, media and government. The Plan of Action will be posted to the Regional Interfaith Network ([www.regionalinterfaith.org.au](http://www.regionalinterfaith.org.au)).

The Regional Interfaith Dialogue in Semarang was the latest regional dialogue involving the participation of religious leaders, civil society, academia and media. The 6<sup>th</sup> Regional Interfaith Dialogue was attended by 120 delegates from co-sponsoring countries Australia, Indonesia, New Zealand and the Philippines, as well as from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam.

Australia and Indonesia are the founders of the Regional Interfaith Dialogue, which was first held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 2004. Other Dialogues have included: Cebu, Philippines (2006); Waitangi, New Zealand (2007); Phnom Penh, Cambodia (2008), and Perth, Australia (2009).

#### ***Media Enquiries:***

*Ray Marcelo, Counsellor (Public Affairs) tel. (021) 2550 5290 mob. 0811 187 3175*