

# No democracy immune to backsliding: FM

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Indonesia has called on countries participating in the Bali Democracy Forum's (BDF) Berlin Chapter to think of solutions for possible democratic setbacks because of bad governance, migration and inequality.

"No democracy is immune to the risk of backsliding — even mature democracies face the danger of setbacks to their practices," Foreign Minister Retno LP Marsudi said in her opening remarks for the BDF-Berlin Chapter in Germany on Friday, in a video broadcast by the Foreign Ministry.

The Berlin forum was themed Democracy and Migration. It is the second chapter of the annual BDF to be held outside of the Asia-Pacific after the BDF-Tunis Chapter was held in October 2017.

Retno added that despite its long-term resilience, democracy appeared more fragile in many countries as people were losing trust in the government because of corruption and ineffective governance.

Furthermore, migration — the scope and quantity of which has recently been increasing and largely driven by conflict and war — also posed fundamental challenges to democracy, she argued.

She then said migration had added complexity to social and economic inequality, which potentially leads to imbalances in voices, representation, opportunity and access that divides the population.

"This kind of alienation can increase support for populist and extremist views and violent conflict — particularly among young people," she added.

Large migration flows continued to put pressure on democratic institutions' capacity to properly and effectively integrate migrants into society, thus regulation alone is not enough to deal with the problem, she said.

"The solution to migration lies not only in national legislation but also in the cultivation of a tolerant and conducive environment that fosters inclusion," she remarked.

Retno further emphasized that special attention should also be



Courtesy of the Foreign Ministry

**Close quarters:** Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno LP Marsudi (*second left*) speaks during a bilateral meeting with her German counterpart Heiko Maas in Berlin on Friday.

**Corruption, ineffective governance leads to fragile democracy, Retno says**

**Forum second to be held outside of Asia-Pacific**

given to the protection of migrant workers, considering it was not only a human rights topic but also a development issue.

She expressed hope that the BDF-Berlin Chapter would bring valuable input for the 11<sup>th</sup> BDF meeting this December in Indonesia, which will carry the theme of Democracy for Prosperity.

"As often said: If we desire a society of peace, then we cannot achieve such a society through violence; If we desire a society without discrimination, then we must not discriminate against anyone; If we desire a society that is democratic, then democracy must become a means as well as an end," she added.

Later that day, Retno held a bilateral meeting with her German counterpart Heiko Maas, where they agreed to boost economic cooperation.

Retno said in a joint statement that she and Maas welcomed the upcoming German-Asia Pacific Business Forum in Indonesia in early November, which would be attended by businesspeople from Germany.

In addition, the two foreign ministers agreed to increase cooperation to accelerate Indonesia-European Union Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations in October, which would enhance trade growth between Indonesian and EU countries, including Germany.

Retno and Maas also discussed their joint efforts to strengthen the global ecosystem of peace and stability, as both Indonesia and Germany will sit as non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council from Jan. 1.

"We agreed to enhance our

commitment between the UNSC members by creating a hotline at the foreign ministerial level, as well as director general and ambassador levels, and regularly consult to compare notes on many issues," she added.

On the BDF-Berlin Chapter, Retno said the undertaking demonstrated "Indonesia and Germany's commitment to promote democracy and global partnership for peace, tolerance and respect for cultural and religious diversity."

"And it also reflects international recognition, especially in Europe, of achievements and relevance of the BDF for the development of democracy," she said, adding that the theme was strategic and timely as both Asia and Europe were facing common challenges from migration.

"Democracy cannot be taken for granted, nor can it take place by chance. We need to work hard to make democracy work and ensure it delivers," she said.