



Hon. Susi Pudjiastuti

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The government is laying out a set of incentives to spur growth in the shipbuilding industry as part of efforts to help realize the maritime-axis platform campaigned by President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo.

After the recent election of President Jokowi the focus of the world has been on Indonesia. Could you share with us the most important policies and the vision of the government?

In regards to maritime affairs and fisheries, President Joko Widodo stated, that the ocean should be the future of Indonesia. To realize this vision, our sovereignty should be in place first. I do see and realize that illegal fishing is the biggest problem in Indonesia in relation to fisheries and marine affairs.

Indonesia has the second largest coastline in the world and two thirds of the area of the country consists of water. However compared with our neighboring countries in South East Asia we are ranked number 5 when it comes to the export of fishery products, Thailand has only one tenth of water territories compared to Indonesia.

It is quite a challenge to monitor and control our maritime territory; therefore enforcement needs to be in place. I have invited ambassadors from neighboring countries to discuss the issue of illegal fishing and to give them a clear picture of what is happening in our water territories. I have also invited Indonesian stakeholders that play a role in illegal fishing and try to communicate with them in an appropriate way. I am determined to take firm action on this activity, because if we don't Indonesia loses 3 million tons of fish or around 30 million US Dollars on a yearly basis.

As a result I have issued two regulations to anticipate and crack down illegal fishing. First of all I put a moratorium on fishing licenses for ex-foreign fishing vessels measuring more than 30 gross tons. Secondly I issued a regulation to ban open-sea transshipment of fisheries products, which is a ban on the process of offloading fish catches from small ships to bigger ones in mid-ocean. Many fish businessmen have misused this by taking the fish catches out of the country without the knowledge of customs. Another issue with open-sea transshipment is that many involved ships are stateless. So when they go back to their own country, they say it is an Indonesian vessel. It is said: “Being a stateless person you are in hell, but being a stateless criminal you are in heaven, because nobody can reach you. You belong to nowhere and you are obliged to nobody.”

The ban on open-sea transshipment has created problems for many industries, especially in the field of seafood products. I believe around 1/6 of industry in this field is affected by this.

Another priority to be able to realize President Joko Widodo's vision is sustainability. To achieve sustainability, letters are sent to all governors and heads of districts in Indonesia and encourage them to free any tax retribution payment for little boats below 10 gross tonnages, in order to revitalize the small fishing industry. Furthermore the mangrove areas in Indonesia should be well conserved and preserved. Thirdly we are focusing on the sustainability of fishing methods. We should look at what is appropriate for environmental friendly fishing in regards to quota, restriction and limitation on fishing equipment. Another unpopular point I have taken is protecting livestock that is endangered, but I have to think about the future of Indonesia. I was even put under pressure by some people, to revise the regulations I have issued. I refused to do so. I would rather resign. Fortunately I have strong support from the President;

otherwise I would not have taken the position of Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.

I have a strong interest in the word "change". I want to establish change to make things better for the country. If I cannot change anything in this ministry, President Jokowi doesn't get the use of me.

We have interviewed the President Directors of Pelindo II and Pelindo III. How do you see the future of the Pelindos in relation to the President's vision of improving the maritime sector?

There are many state owned enterprises, however I don't know if it would be wise to merger all of them become one strong company. This would be an opportunity for the Minister of State Owned Enterprises to make the companies healthier first and then maybe at a later point merge them.

I do believe with the new team, it is possible to make the state owned enterprises very strong. I met several directors and they are quite promising. There are still changes on the way, but I believe that change is for the good.

One of the policies of the government is to achieve self-sufficiency. Your ministry is looking to achieve self-sufficiency in the field of maritime affairs by the end of this year instead of the initial deadline of 2017. Could you elaborate further on this?

I would like to build a strong foundation for the coastal fishing communities; they are one of the biggest stakeholders in the field of maritime affairs and fisheries. What we want to achieve basically, is to make every island in Indonesia to be self-sufficient in their needs. For example Papua, instead of obtaining fisheries products from Jakarta or Java, Papua should use its own sources for its own fisheries needs; there is so much fish in Papua.

I also want to focus on boosting exports of fisheries products, but in an efficient manner. It is not efficient to transport fisheries products from Papua to Jakarta and from Jakarta export the products. Therefore government should build more gateways in order to save on transportation costs. For example a northern gateway in Palau, which allows Papua to transport goods to Palau (north from West Papua) and from there to export to all over the world. Another gateway should be a southern one to Australia. It takes 6 hours from Papua to Jakarta, it is only 1.5 hours from Papua to Australia.

Another priority is to improve the livelihoods for fishing communities. There are several market levels for fisheries products. There is, from lowest level to highest level, dried fish, canned fish, frozen products, frozen added value products, fresh fisheries products and living fisheries products. My aim is to improve their working conditions in order for them to achieve the premium market level of fisheries products. By using small boats for their daily fish catching, they can get better quality fisheries products.

Building up integrated fishing villages with direct access to markets is another focus of mine. Living fisheries products should be transported to the market quickly. Therefore I am pushing for small airstrips over roads. At the moment we are encouraging big companies to build airstrips or start airstrip projects as part of their CSR-programs.

One of the main concerns of the government is to defend its maritime territories. Bakamla plays a major role in this. How does the Ministry cooperate with Bakamla in defending the Indonesian waters?

Bakamla is an institution that plays an important role in defending and securing the economic sovereignty of the country as coast guard. Bakamla is the coordinator for the surveillance monitoring system to make sure the economic sovereignty does not get corrupted. In its activities Bakamla cooperates with amongst others Customs, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and the Ministry of Transportation.

Being a self-made businesswoman now active as Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, what is your opinion about the future of women in the fishing industry?

Especially for the fishermen community, the success of family life depends on the culture of women. In the south coastal part of Java, for example, family life is better and there is an increase in wealth, because the women are in control. The men catch the fish, the women wait on the beach for the fish, and they sell it and get the money. Men get what they need bought by the women. In the north coastal part of Java it is just the opposite, where the men keep the money but use it for drinking, gambling and playing cards.

This is also what I try to influence, to bring the southern culture to the northern part and to other areas where there is a need for

women as the leader of the home, which will improve the quality of community life.

Could you elaborate further on your plans for fuel subsidies.

Many fishermen could not reach the subsidized fuel. So they pay more, because it is just the distribution, it is impossible. No we already cut the subsidy for fishing boats of 30 gross tonnes above, which is connected to boosting the practice of small fishing vessels.

What would your message be for foreign investors, specifically the investors from the United Kingdom to invest in Indonesia?

This illegal fishing costs the country a minimum of 30 billion US Dollars up to 50 billion US Dollars each year. Everybody is welcome to invest in Indonesia, but stay away from fishing. Investments can be done in shipyards, we want to be the fisherman, we want to be the laborer, and we want to be the facilitator. So bring the money, bring the market, we will provide everything.

We need British partners for selling, for building processes, for bringing aquaculture technology, for bringing quality control to be able to produce the best seafood with good traceability and sustainability method on running a fisheries business.

Prior to your position as Minister, you were a successful entrepreneur. What is the crucial factor in your life to achieve success?

The most important trigger for me is that I like to be independent. I love to have my freedom of mind and that it stays that way. When I have my freedom I can do more things and I can do things to the maximum. It is a blessing to be able to fulfill your commitment. Especially when you see it makes other people happy, it is very pleasing.

The more freedom you have, the more space you have and there are no barriers. I can crack down illegal fishing because I am a free person. If you give me freedom, I will do my job. Nobody will be able to use me for the purpose of good, if I don't have my freedom.

I am actually surprised that finally people are not that shocked anymore about me. They take me as someone that is refreshing the atmosphere.