

The NOW! Jakarta Interview with Chairman of British Chamber Commerce in Indonesia Rino Donosepoetro

This month we welcome a gentleman who won't need much introduction to anybody who's in the financial field or indeed in British business, says Alistair Speirs, publisher of Now Media. His name is Rino Donosepoetro, but affectionately known as Donny. Pak Donny, welcome to this interview with NOW! Jakarta, NOW! Bali and MYB Sustainability. We're not going to talk much about Bali because that's not really part of our discussion, but we will certainly be talking about sustainability and certainly about business in Jakarta, especially British business.



Nee Chairman Rino Donosepoetro with his predecessor Ollie Riches.

AGS: I've been privileged to watch the very visible role of Britcham during the pandemic, which refused to lie down and go to sleep. Under the guidance of your predecessor Ollie Riches and Executive Director Chris Wren, Britcham played a very proactive role. Are you going to continue the way which they did it, as laid down by your predecessor?

RD: So, thank you and thank you for having me in this session. It's an honor to be here and by the way you pronounce my name perfectly well. Not many people can do that. Not even the local people can do that!

And to your question, if I may just paint the picture. Thank you for mentioning about Britcham's activities and, yes, we have been the most active foreign chamber in Indonesia in the last few years, particularly during pandemic. We held over 60 events every year and I think Britcham has done a fantastic job in supporting the business community on both sides: the British business community that we represent, as well as the Indonesian business community, through a lot of our work together with our counterpart KADIN in Indonesia.

We have also taken a point in the formulation and by providing inputs together with cutting to both governments, the UK as well as Indonesian during the recent Road Map agreement. And we are very pleased to see that it has been signed and the ministerial meeting level actually has been concluded. That would pave the way for accelerated trade and investment between the two countries in the future. No doubt about it. Look since the beginning of the pandemic, I think we and Britcham have been collaborating with quite a number of our partners and stakeholders and just mentioning a couple of things actually that we have done. - We have been contributing to the war against the pandemic, the vaccination rollout, our members have collected an over 1.5 billion rupiah to support the Government in its war on COVID by driving vaccinations. - We've worked with together with the Singapore chamber of commerce to bring the oxygen tanks during the early days of the pandemic at no cost, with one of our partners and one of our members. - And I think more importantly, we have been helping to drive a lot of international focus, not just from the UK, but from other

countries into how important Indonesia is as an investment destination and as a trading partner.

Now my chairmanship: I'm mainly a steward of the organization taking over from Ollie and the key tenets of us, the executive officers, going forward would be to:

- First and foremost, to build upon what we have achieved so far.
- Number two, we will continue to foster and promote trade investment relations between the two countries and we will be aligning even more closer with our key stakeholders. Most important part will be the UK, that her Majesty's Government, as well as the immigration government and the likes of KADIN.

AGS: But coming from a financial background, rather than Ollie's human resources background, will you be looking at things in a different way or because you're the chairman of Britcham, you'll be following the Britcham basic modus operandi, or will you have a different perspective? Because you are very senior financial guy!

RD: I have been working as together with Ollie for the last two years as his vice chair. And to be perfectly honest, I don't think there's anything different between him and I from that perspective, we're both senior executives for our companies. We understand the mission of Britcham and how we should work very closely together with all the stakeholders in order to provide or create value, more value added for our members and in achieving the goals of forwarding that trade investment between the two countries. So, I don't think that will be any different.

AGS: Well, I think you've just answered the next question straight away, which is: what do you think the role of chambers of commerce should be? Do you represent the commercial interests? Your members, are you more involved presenting the British business community to the Indonesian

government? I mean, there are slightly different nuances to that. Are there not? Who are you? Because you are a membership organization, you do represent your members, don't you?

RD: Absolutely. That's why first and foremost, our goal would be to enhance the value that we create for our members, but the role of goes way beyond that. And as I mentioned earlier the other goals that we have, is to help facilitate and promote further trade investments between the two countries. And we do that role very seriously. Well, ultimately at the end of the day, whatever happens, you know, in the world, because at the moment we are at a rather interesting yet confusing sort of world order with deep disruption in the global supply chain. Then we see the whole inflation sort of spiking up the geopolitical tension, obviously in Europe, and as well as actually in south China. All of our members actually have long term commitments to Indonesia, by the way, we've got over 250 members of which many of our members have been operating in Indonesia for over a hundred years. So that long term perspective is really there so that we don't believe that that would change at all. And if you look at the way that we have been promoting various policy recommendations, advocacy and engagements with the local stakeholders, that really goes beyond fulfilling a short term commercial interest of members. I mean, that goes way beyond that many of our member companies are taking part in the current G 20 under Indonesia's G 20 leadership in either co-chairing or even chairing and providing significant contributions to the development of policy recommendations that would further promote a lot closer ties between the G 20 panels, but particularly between Indonesia and the UK.

AGS: That's wonderful to hear. And I think, hopefully that the momentum built by G 20 will not be interrupted by that stressful situation in Ukraine, which has, as you said, disrupted so many other things, including the supply chain management, which has been badly affected. And of course the energy situation, and this is something which UK and your own body has been recommending very strongly, the moving to sustainability and renewable energy, spearheaded by Ainsley Mann and his group with a very a strong level of activity and sustainability. Is that something you wish to build on is that an area of expertise that Britain can bring to Indonesia? And just in that moment, your experience in finance, is that going to help us through the new carbon tax, carbon trading, all the things that very few of us understand! How people trade carbon, which you can't

see and give credit, which you can't see, it's very complicated, but what is there a role there in for the finance world to help sustainability?

RD: You mentioned about the work that's been done or spearheaded by Ainsley, and I really have to be give credit to that. Ainsley, as the previous chairman, has really brought Britcham into an area where it has now become I think one of the top leading global topic on sustainability. Look, the two countries, the UK and Indonesia, sense the benefit given in collaborating even further because of the specific natures, that the two countries actually have. Now we have four focus groups within Britcham, and one of them is on sustainability that is chaired by Ainsley. And I think we are the most active chamber when it comes to sustainability in Indonesia. Indonesia has significant potential when it comes to nature based solutions. That's no doubt about it. It has super power, natural capital potential. Indonesia is developing its carbon market very, very intensively. As you know, President Jokowi has just signed the Presidential Regulation on carbon economic value just before he flew to Cop 26. Now the UK government has signed an agreement to help Indonesia combat climate change. President Jokowi has signed that agreement with Prime Minister Boris Johnson. The UK has also committed to support from a tactical aspect, how Indonesia should develop this carbon market. From my own personal perspective, I think we have been very much into the sort of value chain of carbon trading and voluntary carbon markets. We believe that this would be one of the key future sectors for Indonesia, because if you talk about carbon credit, it is not about just forestry, the key to unlocking the successful mechanism in helping Indonesia achieve its nett zero, particularly on the energy transition mechanism is by decommissioning early the coal-fired power plants actually regress those carbon trading. That would be the key how to make it commercially viable. Now with all of that potential, I think this particular area is something that we should really be putting a lot of energy and focus on. The two countries are naturally very compatible partners in promoting carbon trading and carbon markets further: Indonesia as the producer and UK as the financial center on the global commodity exchange side, and also representing many of the buyers within the voluntary capital markets.

AGS: Sounds like a very good partnership Pak Donny and now obviously that's going to continue, as you said, but are there new areas that you're thinking

about, that you've got your eye on. What's next, what new ideas are your team coming up with?

RD: Well, I'm not sure about externally, but internally Britcham as an organization. And this is to address your earlier question. We have two fantastic business units. One is our education center. We partner with 15 universities in the UK. We play a bigger part in trying to not just promote higher education to Indonesians to the UK, but also how we can help the Indonesian youth in grasping better about the requirement of being a leader in a sustainable world. So, for example, we just signed an agreement with APEKSI, the Indonesian Mayors Association that represents 98 cities with 98 mayors. The intention is to support them in their Youth City Changer Program that focuses on building the right skills of leadership for the city's youth in the current sustainable focused world. So I also believe that we can expand our education center in collaboration with the business council to create further values that in turn will create a commercial element within that, because for example, successful placements of any Indonesia students in universities that we represent would also generate funds that can be put in back actually to activities that would help or create more values to the members. The second organization unit, is our business center. This started from the Overseas Business Network program with the DFID. But the capability that we have in supporting British companies who would want to invest or operate or doing its marketing Indonesia remains there, I believe we can grow that further. We can be the right partner for any British companies who would want to operate and do business in Indonesia, from an advisory perspective to licensing, all the way to their marketing activities in Indonesia. So that is really something that we believe the synergy actually between the units of Britcham can give us some low hanging fruit benefits in the short term.

AGS: Well, I think your emphasis on youth and education is absolutely exemplary. That's what's needed more than anything in Indonesia to bring the next generation on through: a very good education and where better than Britain. But we've got a bit of a problem with Europe, don't we, with Britain and Brexit, but you are still part of Eurocham. How does that work? How can you be part of Eurocham when you're not part of Europe?

RD: Well, as I understand it constitutionally Eurocham exists to support all countries within the continent of Europe. So not just the political

entity of European union and given this aspect of mission, and that bridge is a founding member with a permanent board representative, how relationship engagement and support of remains largely unaffected.

But I think from the business side, it would be the benefit of EuroCham as well as Britcham. I mean, in this day and age, whether it's sustainability, digitization, look at how digital ecosystem, all hands on deck and collaboration is really the key in promoting further trade and welfare to societies, and I think actually this exclusivity is no longer the name of the game.

AGS: *I'm delighted to hear that. But even someone like myself in the, the sustainability sphere as well, we find that instead of collaboration, there is still competition because people want to be the top dog in their field, unfortunately,*

RD: You're absolutely right. Alistair, there's always nuances and elements of that permeating, but we know that coming back to sustainability, this is something that I'm really very passionate about in promoting. The only way that all of us in humanity can achieve the Paris agreement is by working closely together. The emerging markets require trillions of dollars. If we are to meet the targets by 2030, and there's no better way actually to achieve that than by collaborating together, whether you are in the government sector or public sector. The multi development banks, the global capital market funds, your asset management, hedge funds, and others, along with the private sectors in each of the emerging markets now voluntary carbon markets is another example where that intermediary instrument in the form of carbon credit has really helped. And I have a lot of faith actually, that it will become even more dominant in the future in bridging that capital leads from the developed markets or the high-income countries as the G 20 to the low income countries where the sustainability action is really needed the most in terms of funding.

AGS: *Well, let's hope that that collaboration all continues and does produce the results that we're looking for now. At the beginning of our conversation, you mentioned the major changes are happening: we've got the end of COVID, we're in the middle, and are hopefully coming towards the end of the Ukrainian war. And we've got quite a lot of tension in the South China sea, with Indonesia as a neutral country declaring themselves quite strongly during this G 20 presidency and UK has pretty much come out on the side of US in the south China sea, and certainly on the side of Europe, in the Ukrainian war. Are there*



BRITCHAM INDONESIA

any difficulties because of that from a business point of view, you're not in politics, you're just in business, but are there going to be any problems there?

RD: If you look at it in terms of whether the geopolitical issues have affected the business. Yes, that's no doubt about it. The commodity prices supercycle that's happening now partly was contributed because of the war in Ukraine and Russia. But you know, it's always been part and parcel of how we do business. Again, I would stress and underlying that the members that we represent actually have got long term views about relationships, particularly with Indonesia. We have many who have been here for over a hundred years. It's very long-term perspective. But then actually on the more sort of pragmatic level, we do not foresee that the geopolitical issues will affect relationships specifically on the economic and trade sector between the UK and Indonesia.

AGS: *Good. That's exactly what we want to hear. Now I know it's an organization which is based on membership but do you have any personal ideas that you really want to see happening during your chairmanship? You've got anything which you say, "look, I love this. I want to see this happening?"*

RD: I don't think I should have any particular personal interest that I have in this. I've been part of the board for the last three years. And I'm merely the steward of this organization until I pass it on to the next steward. But the strength of the organization is the collective nature. And I'm really very proud to see that. I think within the board, you can see the varieties of representation across almost all sectors, that really represents actually strength of British investments and company operations in Indonesia. What I would like to see is that, that we can work more effectively as an organization in promoting the trade investors within the two country in getting value for our members and that while we are doing it, we have grown closer. It's really fun to be part of the board. I must say we have no

politics actually and within the board we are all collaborating,

AGS: *That's excellent. I have an area, which I proposed to Britch many years ago, that I love but I still don't think it has been fulfilled. And it's a huge area of expertise in Britain, which is tourism. Britain is one of the great tourist destinations of the world. And we haven't got anything really happening in on that here. The other area where we are absolutely world leaders in Britain, is culture, the whole museum management and the events management and the theatre, which again, we have done nothing with. It is a business. All of that is now a manageable business, but nothing's been done yet.*

RD: Actually, that is interesting idea. We certainly help promote awareness about the UK from a cultural perspective, from a destination holiday destination perspective. I know many of our board members actually have been keenly advocating on that. But I think there is also significantly increasing interest on the English Premiership week actually has also helped by the way. Hugh Moffatt our country director for British Council mentioned that the number of students from Indonesia going to the UK is increasing in a double digit sort of growth year on year, but there's one particular city that seems to be like spiking up in terms of interest of indigenous cities going there. And that's Liverpool, well, one may wonder why! Okay. I can't agree more with you. And I'll take that on board. I think Britcham and I should also be working with the tourism authorities of the UK and helping to promote this area.

AGS: *Good Pak Donny. That's the end of my questions for you today, you have, as expected given us clear, precise, and well measured answers, and we wish you the very best of luck in your chairmanship, as you say, the stewardship of Britcham during your tenure as chairman. On behalf of NOW! Jakarta, NOW! Bali and MVB. Thank you very much, it's been a great pleasure.*