

**Holger Standertskjöld**

Ambassador and Head of the Delegation of the European Union to  
Singapore

**Speech by Ambassador and Head of the Delegation of the  
European Union to Singapore Holger Standertskjöld**

*Check Against Delivery*  
*Seul le texte prononcé fait foi*  
*Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

**Europe Day Reception, Asian Civilisations Museum  
Singapore, 07 May 2010**

DEAR MINISTER

Members of Parliament,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to our annual Europe Day celebrations and thank you for sharing this evening with us. This year marks the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Europe Day – a day when the Schuman declaration was signed and Europe started on a course of integration on such a scale that, at the time it may have seemed unfathomable. It was merely five years after the end of World War two that the first official steps were taken towards the creation of the institution which has become the European Union.

One of the fundamental premises of this new united Europe was to ensure a long-lasting peace among European countries and development and prosperity to 'all Europeans without distinction, whether from east to west'. It indeed took us some time to achieve a truly united Europe – which ultimately was achieved with the accession of ten countries predominantly from Eastern Europe to the EU in 2004. In this regard I am honoured that we are joined this evening by Lech Walesa whom has been an instrumental figure in bringing about change in this part of Europe. *(insert something about recent Poland events?)*

I am also joined, on stage, by my fellow EU Ambassadors and consuls, who are a testament to the project of European integration and just what we have achieved in the past 60 years. I am proud that such a large family of colleagues from the 27

Member States of the European Union are represented here in Singapore.

Diversity is a term that one hears much about here in Singapore, whether it is the diverse nature of Singapore or the diversity of regional organisations such as ASEAN. We are no strangers to diversity in the European Union either. Perhaps the most diverse countries were, at the time, the founding members of the European Union who, having just emerged from the ravages of the Second World War, saw the necessity to establish a set of fundamental values to be respected by all. It is these values that we have sought to maintain that have helped us build a Union that is strong in Europe and strong in the world. This continued strength comes from the commitment of our members to working together to upholding these fundamental values.

The EU is an important global actor economically and politically. We are the largest economy and account for a third of world trade and GDP. We are the largest contributor of development aid in the world (over 60%). We remain committed to the fight against Climate Change and believe there needs to be a continued global effort to tackle this global challenge.

Our reputation goes beyond our performance on the world economic and political stage. The very nature of our diversity has allowed our cultural heritage to become well known and appreciated worldwide. We have some fine examples of European culture for you later on this evening which I hope you will enjoy.

In the EU one of our primary goals is to be of benefit to our citizens and to unite our efforts for the greater good. We have taken a major step towards streamlining our processes and becoming more relevant, more accountable and more beneficial to our citizens with the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty in late 2009. This treaty has brought with it a number of changes for us in Europe but also for us in our dealings with countries outside of Europe. We hope that these changes will serve to make Europe more coherent and accessible to our important partners around the world, including Singapore – which continues to be an important partner in South East Asia.

The European Union would not be as strong as it is if it were not for good cooperation with all of our external partners. Europe Day, and this celebration, provides us with an occasion to reflect on our strong relations with our host country, Singapore. As the representative of the European Union in Singapore, I am deeply appreciative of the cooperation we enjoy with our Singapore partners and *I am fortunate enough to be able to build upon the excellent relations the EU Member States also have in Singapore. (are you OK with this language in light of the ongoing Rom situation?)*

It is our aim at the European Union to further improve our relations with Singapore and the ASEAN region as a whole by building partnerships in a way that is mutually beneficial to all those concerned. In this regard, I am very pleased with how the EU-Singapore FTA negotiations are progressing and we hope to conclude the agreement within the planned timeframe.

The overall EU-Singapore relationship is healthy, Singapore has weathered the economic downturn perhaps better than Europe at the moment, however we believe we have also turned a corner in Europe. The growing presence of European business over the past number of years has contributed in making Singapore a significant trading and investment partner. There are over 3,000 European Companies operating in Singapore and the EU is Singapore's largest trading partner. The EU is also Singapore's largest source of foreign direct investment.

This strong relationship is, of course, enhanced by the increasingly active presence of the European Chamber of Commerce in Singapore. Led by Francois Guibert, EuroCham continues to be an important part of cementing and building on our strong economic ties to Singapore. We would of course be lost without our now well-established European Union Centre in Singapore – which with Dr. Yeo Law Hwee at the helm continues to bring about a new dimension to the understanding and knowledge of the EU in Singapore.

Of course, just as the EU is not simple a trading bloc, the EU's partnership with Singapore is not limited to trade. We share many similar views including a deep respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity and a commitment to regional integration.

As a fine example of Europe in Singapore I'd just like to remind you all that as part of our Europe Day celebrations, the 20<sup>th</sup> European Union Film Festival had its official opening last night. It runs until 16<sup>th</sup> May at Golden Village Vivocity and I hope that you will all have the opportunity to catch some of the films – of which there are 17 showcasing the cultural diversity of the EU.

Finally, celebrating Europe Day is not only about serious speeches. It is about celebrating with friends and also about savouring the culinary delights that Europe has to offer. The menu created tonight by the Hyatt Chefs includes a dish from each of the EU countries with Embassies in Singapore. We are also very fortunate today to have a wide range of beverages to choose from; this is thanks to generous contributions from the EU Member States Embassies, for which I would like to thank them most warmly.

On this note Minister, Members of Parliament, Excellencies, friends, may I ask you - **after** the Singapore National anthem - to join my colleagues the Ambassadors and Consuls of the EU Member States and myself in a toast to the President of the Republic of Singapore and the strengthening of the relations between the European Union and Singapore.

<Anthem>

Toast "To the President"