



EUROPEAN UNION

Delegation of the European Union to
the Philippines

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EU AMBASSADOR JESSEN HONORS F. SIONIL JOSE

European Union Ambassador Franz Jessen paid tribute to one of the country's living literary treasures, National Artist for Literature, F. Sionil Jose, at the Europe Day reception held on 9 May 2018, by conferring an award of distinction for strengthening cultural links between the EU and the Philippines to Mr Sionil Jose.

Ambassador Jessen said that Mr Sionil Jose has contributed significantly in bringing Filipinos and Europeans closer through his acclaimed writings, and he continues to bring hope and light to an increasingly complex world.

The award given to Mr Sionil Jose also marks the celebration of the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage.

Accepting the award, Mr Sionil Jose thanked Ambassador Jessen and said:

"I am not going to be coy about it. I'm 93 years old and after all these many years of hardwork, I know I deserve this award. It's not only I who deserves it, however. There are others in my generation who do – Nick Joaquin and Salvador Lopez and beyond them – the Spanish writer of the early 1900s, Rafael Palma, to Marcelo del Pilar and most of all Jose Rizal. I also add to this distinguished list our vernacular writers, who like most of us were rooted in the profound humanist tradition of the West".

He also said that the essence of Asian tradition is harmony and respect for hierarchy, whereas western tradition enshrines revolution and freedom.

"I propose instead that we look deeply into our Western heritage, and perceive the strengths that have made Europe endure. Therein lies the answer to the many problems we face today and why this award should have more meaning, not only for me but to all my countrymen".

Most of F. Sionil Jose's novels have been translated into European languages. He is also a publisher, lecturer on cultural issues, and the founder of the Philippine chapter of the International PEN. He was bestowed the CCP Centennial Honors for the Arts in 1999; the Outstanding Fulbrighters Award for Literature in 1988; and the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature, and Creative Communication Arts in 1980.