



European Union
Delegation to Singapore

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**WELCOME REMARKS BY H.E. BARBARA PLINKERT
European Union Ambassador to Singapore**

**Friday, 8th November 2019. 8pm.
Grand Hyatt, Singapore**

Minister S. Iswaran,
Commissioner Phil Hogan,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

A very warm welcome to all of you and thank you for joining us to celebrate a very special day of partnership between the EU and Singapore. Our ties are deep and longstanding, but they are gaining even further significance at a time when the world is undergoing fast and unprecedented transformations. Therefore, what we celebrate today is not only our excellent relations in economic terms, but also our commitment and belief, both in the EU and here in Singapore, in the fundamental principles of multilateralism and the rules-based international order.

More precisely, the occasion of gathering here tonight is to mark the imminent entry into force of a modern, ambitious and wide-ranging Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and Singapore. We have finally reached this point after the official signing of the Agreement in Brussels in October 2018, and the subsequent consent given by the European Parliament in February 2019.

On Singapore's side, we were informed that all internal ratification procedures have also been completed. This truly is a milestone and a great achievement, underlining the importance of our ties. It is also significant to note that the EUSFTA will be complemented by another two agreements, the EU-Singapore Investment Protection Agreement and the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, once those two agreements will have been ratified by all EU Member States.

So we are now opening a new chapter of our friendship and partnership.

Minister, you told me once that the FTA reminds you of the Beatles song "A Long and Winding Road". Well, I agree that there is truth in this analogy, and indeed the road has been long, and sometimes winding. But let me say that there is one fundamental difference. In the song, the road leads to something unattainable, to a door that can never quite be reached. I am very glad to be able to say today that, at the end of the road that we have walked together in negotiating the EUSFTA, we really have achieved what we aimed for. In fact, it is not only a happy

end, but the start of a new and ambitious level of collaboration. If I may quote you again, Minister, with a sentence I heard you say only yesterday: "What is important is not so much how long it takes to negotiate an FTA, but how substantive it is".

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

You will no doubt hear more about what the EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement means for our collaboration and for trade between the EU and Singapore from the two distinguished guests of honour, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for their presence here tonight.

It is an honour to welcome Minister Iswaran. In his capacities as Minister for Trade and Industry and now Minister-in-charge of Trade Relations he has been engaged with the FTA process on a continuous basis throughout the past years, almost since the start of the negotiations in March 2010. His personal commitment has been instrumental in this process.

It is our privilege truly to welcome, in Singapore, the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Commissioner-designate for Trade, Phil Hogan. Indeed, Commissioner Hogan is visiting Singapore for the second time this year, and has specifically accompanied the final steps towards getting the FTA under way, in the context of setting up the registry of Geographical Indications which protects iconic European food and drink products. This process has now been completed with the excellent collaboration of the teams on both sides.

In concluding and before leaving the stage to our two distinguished guests of honour, let me say some words of appreciation to our partners in organizing this event. First and foremost, my sincere thanks go to the colleagues at the Ministry of Trade and Industry without whose support this event could not have been a success. A big thank you also to the European Chamber of Commerce, the EU-ASEAN Business Council, the Singapore Business Federation and Enterprise Singapore for their active engagement and to The Straits Times Associate Editor who will be moderating the Fireside chat later this evening. Finally, my sincere thanks go to my extraordinary colleagues at the EU Delegation who never shy away from going the extra mile and without whose commitment this event would certainly not have been possible.

With this, I would like to wish you a very good evening and thank you once again for joining this celebration – please enjoy!