



**Welcome Remarks by Ambassador Wonil Cho
Executive Director, Asia-Europe Foundation**

Book Launch:

*“The EU through the Eyes of Asia:
Media, Public and Elite Perceptions in China, Japan,
Korea, Singapore and Thailand”*

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

1. Thank you for being with us today. On behalf of the Asia-Europe Foundation, I would like to firstly express our sincere appreciation for the excellent partnership that we have enjoyed with the National University of Singapore. NUS is one of the six prominent universities in Asia that have participated in the “EU through the Eyes of Asia” study. This is a major academic collaboration initiated by ASEF to scientifically measure perceptions of the European Union in Asia. The book we are launching today, “The EU through the Eyes of Asia: Media, Public and Elite Perceptions in China, Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand” is the result of this two-year undertaking. We highly-appreciate NUS’s contribution to this endeavour.
2. I would like to especially thank Prof. Lai Choy Heng, Vice Provost of NUS, and Ambassador Holger Standertskjold, Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to Singapore, for gracing this event with their presence. I would also like to thank members of our esteemed panel: Mr. John Chalmers, Senior Editor of Reuters; and Mr. Joachim Ihrcke, President of the European Chamber of Commerce of Singapore, who

have taken the time out of their busy schedules to share their thoughts with us today. And certainly, I am grateful for the support of Associate Professor Barnard Turner, Academic Convenor of NUS's European Studies Programme and lead professor for our team in Singapore.

3. The growing links between the EU and Asia are among the most important strategic relationships in the world. The Asia-Europe Meeting process, in short "ASEM", has been an important driver in this relationship. The Asia-Europe Foundation is the sole institution of the ASEM process, mandated to bridge civil society in the two regions. Over the past 12 years, ASEF has implemented over 400 projects, which have brought together more than 14,000 participants and reached out to an even wider audience in the countries of Asia and Europe. Currently the ASEM partnership includes all 27 member states of the European Union, all 10 countries in ASEAN, China, Korea, Japan, India, Pakistan, Mongolia, the European Commission and the ASEAN secretariat.

4. The Asia-Europe Foundation has championed civil society networks that have grown progressively in the past 12 years. This has been achieved through a number of flagship programmes in areas such as the dialogue of cultures and civilisations; cultural policy; youth; good governance, democracy and human rights; environment and sustainable development; and programmes dealing with international relations issues such as conflict management and processes of regional integration. In the field of education and academic co-operation, ASEF has initiated a number successful of programmes such as the Asia-

Europe Journal, the Asia-Europe Workshop Series and the European Studies in Asia (ESiA) network.

5. The ESiA network was initiated by ASEF in 2005 to stimulate and promote European studies in the Asian region. There was an imbalance between the number of European institutions specialising in Asian studies and the number of Asian institutions specialising in European studies. We saw this as inimical to Asia-Europe understanding and bi-regional policy dialogue. ASEF set out to correct this imbalance in a constructive way. ESiA was conceived as platform for Asian academics and institutions specialising in European studies to exchange ideas, network and engage in academic collaborations and partnerships – not only amongst their colleagues in Asia, but also with their counterparts in Europe.

6. The “EU through the Eyes of Asia” is ESiA’s inaugural project to measure media, public and elite perceptions of the EU in the Asian region. The first wave of countries monitored in this project are China (including Hong Kong), Japan, Korea, Singapore and Thailand. The publication we are launching today represents an unprecedented mobilisation of six prominent Asian universities in the field of European studies: Fudan University, Hong Kong Baptist University, Keio University, Korea University, Chulalongkorn University and of course, the National University of Singapore. I cannot stress enough the crucial role of the Prof. Martin Holland, and his team at the National Centre for Research on Europe, University of Canterbury, in the endeavour. The

project would have also not been possible without the kind support of the European Commission and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France.

7. The recent expansion of the project to Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines, with the aim to be able to include the remaining Asian ASEM countries by 2010, will certainly give the findings an even wider Asian focus. The findings of this study are not only meant to be an example of European studies academic excellence and academic collaboration in Asia, but also for the benefit of policy makers in Asia and Europe.
8. We first presented this book to European Commission President Jose Manuel Barosso in soft launch in Singapore in November last year. We have also launched the publication in Manila last December and have organised a series of lectures in twelve cities in Europe. This event in Singapore is the first of a series of book launches we will organise this year in seven cities across Asia. The next book launch will be held in Hanoi next month in partnership with Vietnam National University and the Delegation of the European Commission in Vietnam.
9. However, the focus of the event today will be on Singapore. The island-state's status as a major economic and financial hub in Asia consequently results in a wide network of important relations and partnerships, including that with the EU, on bilateral, multilateral and bi-regional levels. I am confident that Associate Professor Barnard Turner's presentation today which will highlight Singaporean public, media and elites attitudes and opinions towards EU will definitely be of much

contemporary relevance. I believe we will all benefit from the presentation and the panel discussion that will follow afterwards.

Thank you.