



Welcome Remarks by ASEF ED, Amb MORIKAWA Toru at the ASEF's 25th Anniversary Commemoration, 15 March 2023 at 2.30am, Asia-Europe Foundation

1. Good Afternoon.
2. Distinguished Guest of Honour, Your Excellency **Dr Vivian BALAKRISHNAN, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore,**

Your Excellency, Mr Ng Teck Hean, Deputy Secretary for Foreign Affairs, ASEM SOM Leader from Singapore, Your Excellency, Mr. Javier Parrondo, the Chair of the Board of the Governors of the Asia-Europe Foundation, Your Excellencies, the Heads of Mission from Asia and Europe and our esteemed Governors.

3. I extend a very warm welcome to you on behalf of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) to this special event.
4. Today's event is the culmination of a series of activities to commemorate ASEF's 25th Anniversary ([#ASEF25](#)). ASEF was established based on the agreement by the leaders at the 1st Summit of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). Since 1997, as the sole organisation of the ASEM Process, ASEF has been implementing intellectual, cultural and people to people exchange projects in 7 thematic areas to bring Asians and Europeans together.
5. Over the last quarter century, the landscape of bi-regional exchange has changed substantially. Entering the commemorative year in 2022, we had barely begun to emerge from the shadow of COVID-19 as the geopolitical disruption in Europe erupted. It caused, and has been causing, deep impact on the dialogue between Asia and Europe as well as on ASEF.
6. Now is the time for us all to slow down a bit and reflect on how we can enhance the exchange between Asia and Europe, and what role ASEF

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should play for the betterment of Asia and Europe and beyond in the new reality. We are particularly grateful to our Guest of Honour, the Singapore Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan for sharing his precious insights here today and to have a discussion with us despite his very busy schedule.

7. I would like to place on record our deep gratitude for the Singapore government's unwavering support and encouragement in promoting ASEF's vision and mission.
8. Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan is no stranger to us. After having served as Minister with different portfolios, Dr Balakrishnan has helmed the Singapore MFA since October 2015. Under his insightful leadership, Singapore has been playing important roles such as Chair of ASEAN in 2018, the host of the Singapore Summit between the US and North Korea, co-chairpersonship of the Friends of the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility. He concurrently served as Minister in charge of the Smart Nation Initiative till 2021.
9. Minister Dr Balakrishnan attended the 14th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Madrid, Spain in December 2019. At ASEM FMM14, the Ministers emphasised the need to uphold and revitalise multilateralism, especially amidst global uncertainty.
10. As the two regions of Asia and Europe tackle pressing situations, the first thing that we need to do in this bi-regional dialogue is to listen. Listening to each other will be the way for us to break the ice and the key to open a door for the common future where Asians and Europeans work shoulder to shoulder for the betterment of the entire world. Let us start our exciting intellectual journey of Asia and Europe dialogue by listening to the Keynote speech by our distinguished Guest of Honour. I wish all invited guests and the Minister a thoughtful and frank exchange of views and opinions during the closed-door discussion session. Your Excellency, you have the floor.

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