



Remarks by ASEF Executive Director, Amb MORIKAWA Toru at the Asia-Europe Dialogue Series, 31 August 2023 (Singapore), 5pm

1. Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is with immense pleasure and honour that I welcome you to the first event of the Asia-Europe Dialogue Series.
2. This new programme is a key component of the **new Strategic Plan for ASEF**, adopted in July this year by our Board of Governors. It aims at addressing the new dynamics of the relationship between Asia and Europe.
3. In a world that is evolving at an unprecedented pace, and that requires collective efforts to address common global challenges, it is more important than ever before to have **meaningful conversations**.
4. The Asia-Europe Foundation is committed to bringing together the peoples of Asia and Europe, to advance mutual understanding and collaboration in the spirit of **mutual respect and equal partnership**.
5. Today, we gather as a diverse community to celebrate the exchanges between Asians and Europeans that led to the creation of our **shared heritage**.
6. We begin this series of dialogue with an exploration of **linguistic exchanges** between Asia and Europe, through a manuscript of Malayo-Portuguese pantuns dated from the late 17th century that was rediscovered in Lisbon, Portugal.
7. This manuscript presents a collection of “**pantuns**”, a form of Malay verse. “This form was inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2020. Pantuns have been used in maritime Southeast Asia for at least 500 years, and often evoke a harmonious relationship between human beings and the natural world.”
8. “Considering the UNESCO figures, which estimate that spoken languages are disappearing around the world at a rate of one every two weeks, there is great urgency to alert about the alarming disappearance of our linguistic and cultural wealth.” The Malay-

Portuguese-Creole these pantuns were written in, is an example of an endangered language.

9. Both the Malay and Portuguese languages are spoken across geographies, and it is important to remember that **languages belong to all those who express themselves and live through them**. “When a language dies, a piece of human history also disappears.”
10. Today’s dialogue embodies the essence of **unity in diversity** and highlights the power of co-existence.
11. It also serves as a platform to learn from each other, engage in discussion, exchange perspectives, and lay the foundations for **mutual understanding**.
12. As we navigate through past experiences, let us harness the opportunity to broaden our horizons by opening our minds, opening our hearts, and **opening the doors for future mutually beneficial opportunities**.
13. On behalf of ASEF, I would like to extend my gratitude to the ASEF Governor and Ambassador of Portugal to Singapore, His Excellency Ambassador Mario Miranda Duarte, and to the Embassy of Portugal in Singapore, co-organiser of this event, for collaborating with ASEF, the only bi-regional institution to promote people-to-people connections.
14. I would also like to thank our distinguished guest of honour, the Ambassador of Indonesia to Singapore, His Excellency Suryo Pratomo, for his unwavering support to ASEF and for his commitment to Asia-Europe collaboration as the way to shape the future.
15. We were eagerly anticipating the presence of His Excellency Dato' Dr. Azfar bin Mohamad Mustafar, High Commissioner of Malaysia at this event. Unfortunately, he is unable to join us today due to unforeseen difficult circumstances. I would like to extend our solidarity to him in this solemn moment.
16. I would also like to take this occasion to extend our warm congratulations to **Malaysia for celebrating its 66th National Day** today.

Let us congratulate our friends for this momentous milestone in their history, and celebrate with them the diversity that unites us.

17. Thank you to all in attendance today, for your curiosity and for being part of this remarkable gathering. I invite you to immerse yourselves in the dialogue that lies ahead.

18. Thank you.

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