



Inaugural Singapore-Australia Dialogue

27-28 July 2009



Jointly organised by
Australian Institute of International Affairs &
Singapore Institute of International Affairs



Outcomes Report

This report summarises the main outcomes of the Inaugural Singapore-Australia Dialogue held in Singapore on the 27-28 July 2009 jointly hosted by the Australian Institute of International Affairs and the Singapore Institute of International Affairs.

On the 27th of July, a Ministerial Launch of the Singapore-Australia Dialogue was held at the National Library of Singapore. The Hon Stephen Smith MP, the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and His Excellency George Yeo, Singapore Minister for Foreign Affairs, spoke on bilateral relations between the two countries and the role of each country in the Asia-Pacific region.

On the 28th of July, the Inaugural Singapore-Australia Dialogue brought together experts from Australia and Singapore for invitation-only discussion at the Singapore Regent Hotel, conducted under Chatham house rules to allow for frank discussion.

Delegates focused on four topics of importance to both countries: regional security and cooperation, economic issues in the global financial crisis, multiculturalism within and between countries and moving the region forward post-crisis.

Highlights of the event included

- Ministerial Launch attended by both the Australian and Singapore Ministers for Foreign Affairs which attracted significant media attention
- Participation by a formidable Australian delegation including former high level Australian diplomats, senior academic experts and representatives from organisations such as Asialink, the Lowy Institute for International Policy and AustCham Singapore
- Involvement of expatriate Australian experts resident in Singapore
- Reception at the Australian High Commission Singapore in conjunction with the “Colour & Country – Celebrating Indigenous Australia” art exhibition.
- Preparation and publication of summary of proceedings highlighting key points of discussion.



Arrival of the Hon. Stephen Smith, MP, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs and His Excellency George Yeo, Singapore Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Ministerial launch



Ministerial Launch

The Ministerial Launch of the Singapore-Australia Dialogue was held at the National Library of Singapore on 27 July 2009. Participants in the Dialogue attended the launch along with invited business, media and other representatives.

The Hon. Stephen Smith, MP, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and His Excellency George Yeo, Singapore Minister for Foreign Affairs, spoke on bilateral relations between Singapore and Australia. The Launch provided an opportunity for attendees to gain insights into the nature and future directions of the relationship, and allowed participants to widen their networks and deepen connections with other participants.



The Ministers take questions flanked by SIIA Chairman Associate Professor Simon Tay and AIIA WA Branch President Dr Sue Boyd

Inaugural Singapore Australia Dialogue

The Dialogue brought together expert delegations from the Singapore Institute of International Affairs and the Australian Institute of International Affairs Australia for a second track roundtable discussion on 28 July 2009 at The Regent Hotel.

Specific objectives included:

- To enable an influential and significant group of participants to engage in dynamic discussion about bilateral, regional and international issues, including regional security and the response of both countries to the global financial crisis.
- To foster a better understanding of, and improved cooperation in dealing with, these issues.
- To provide a summary of proceedings, and make this available to government and the general public.

The Australian delegation was drawn from a variety of backgrounds and organisations including former high level Australian diplomats, senior academic experts and representatives from key organisations with a focus on Asia. The AIIA delegation comprised:

- Dr Sue Boyd, WA Branch President, Australian Institute of International Affairs
- Mr Dick Woolcott AC, Former Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Professor James Cotton, Australian Defence Force Academy, University of New South Wales
- Ms Jenny McGregor, Chief Executive Officer, Asialink, The University of Melbourne
- Mr Mark Thirlwell, Program Director, International Economy, Lowy Institute for International Policy
- Ms Melissa Conley Tyler, National Executive Director, Australian Institute of International Affairs
- Professor Tony Milner, Basham Professor of History, Centre for Asian Societies and Histories, Australian National University and Professorial Fellow, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne

The following Singapore-based experts with an Australian connection were included as part of the Australian delegation:

- Professor Simon Chesterman, National University of Singapore
- Professor Wang Gungwu, The East Asian Institute, National University of Singapore
- Mr Michael Richardson, Visiting Fellow, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
- Mr John Dick, Regional Managing Partner, Freehills and Representative, AustCham Singapore
- Mr Geoff Wade, Senior Research Fellow, National University of Singapore

Deputy High Commissioner Ms Penny Burt and Mr Anton Alblas attended on behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade.



*Mr Dick Woolcott AC
and Ambassador-at-
Large Tommy Koh*



The SIIA delegation included experts from diplomacy, business and academia:

- Associate Professor Simon Tay, Chairman, Singapore Institute of International Affairs
- Ambassador Tommy Koh, Ambassador-at-Large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mr Manu Bhaskaran, Founding Partner, Centennial Asia Advisors Pty Ltd
- Dr Mely Caballero-Anthony, Head, Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies
- Mr Azhar Ghani, Institute of Policy Studies, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore
- Dr Lai Ah Eng, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore
- Dr Yeo Lay Hwee, Director, European Union Centre in Singapore
- Dr Hank Lim, Director of Research, Singapore Institute of International Affairs
- Dr Chia Siow Yue, Senior Research Fellow, Singapore Institute of International Affairs

The Dialogue was conducted in roundtable format under Chatham House rule to enable a frank exchange of views. In each of four 90 minute sessions, two speakers from Singapore and Australia offered their comments in a conversational format followed by general discussion:

- Regional Security and Cooperation
- Economic Issues in the Global Financial Crisis
- Multiculturalism within and between Countries
- The Global Financial Crisis – Moving the Region Forward



*Roundtable discussion
format*

Reception

The Australia-Singapore Dialogue concluded with a reception at the Australian High Commission, held in conjunction with “Colour and Country – Celebrating Indigenous Australia”, a specially curated Australian art exhibition.



Responses

Participant Evaluation

Participants assessed the event very positively. The quality of speakers and discussants was considered high, and the following comments were extended in appreciation of the event:

“I learned from the papers and particularly from meeting the participants.”

“I congratulate you on this initiative”

“It was very instructive for me”

“An excellent preparation for my posting to Singapore”

“I enjoyed the meeting”

Participants noted the importance of such dialogue between Australia and Singapore, and expressed interest in participation in future years.

Media and Networks

The Singapore Institute of International Affairs managed media for the event, with a number of media outlets attending and reporting on the event. Some regional media also covered the event, including Yahoo’s news report.

Dr Wilhelm Hofmeister, Director of Political Dialogue Asia/Singapore, for the Konrad Adenauer Foundation attended the event as an observer. It is hoped that the AIIA can work together with the Foundation in the future.

Outcomes

While the Dialogue was conducted under Chatham House Rule to enable candid discussion, a Summary of Proceedings has been prepared to be distributed to policy-makers and interested experts. It will be publicly available on the AIIA website <www.aia.asn.au>.



*Professor Wang Gungwu
of the National University
of Singapore, formerly of
the Australian National
University*



Acknowledgements

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- Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, Australia
- Australian High Commission, Singapore
- National Library of Singapore
- Singapore Airlines
- Lee Foundation

For their contributions to the launch of the Inaugural Singapore-Australia Dialogue, we thank:

- The Hon Stephen Smith, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Singapore
- His Excellency George Yeo, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Singapore

We extend thanks to key discussants, chairs and all those who participated in the Inaugural Singapore-Australia Dialogue.

The AIA would also like to recognise the following who assisted with organisation of the event:

- Dr Sue Boyd, President of WA Branch, Australian Institute of International Affairs
- Mr Geoff Miller AO, National Vice-President, Australian Institute of International Affairs
- Mr Clive Hildebrand, National President, Australian Institute of International Affairs
- Ms Melissa Conley Tyler, National Executive Director, Australian Institute of International Affairs
- Mr Masaki Kataoka, Intern, Australian Institute of International Affairs
- Ms Kate Andren, Former Intern, Australian Institute of International Affairs

Thanks are especially due to our counterparts at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, without whom this event would not have been possible.



*AIA and SIIA
organisers at the
Ministerial launch*