

ADDRESS BY
HER EXCELLENCY MS QUENTIN BRYCE AC
GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
ON THE OCCASION OF
STATE BANQUET HOSTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE
THE ISTANA, OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE
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Thank you for your warm and generous welcome to Michael and me this afternoon.

And, on behalf of all Australians, I respond with affectionate greetings to you, our friends and fellows.

How special it is to join you here on this magnificent estate:

- . so rich in Singaporean history,
- . and yet at the heart of your country's fine contemporary democracy;
- . the stunning gardens - a "tropical renaissance";
- . and this glorious public building that holds the memory of footprints and voices from the past 140 years;
- . a house and home for all Singaporeans, and a host to visitors of every nation.

My friends, this is my first overseas trip since commencing in my role as Governor-General of Australia.

I feel so immensely privileged to be in a position that offers boundless opportunity:

- . for renewing and nurturing friendships of nations;
- . for furthering international cooperation and community engagement;
- . and participation in the gathering of people and organisations from vastly different worlds, united by a common ethos.

I carry these sentiments and aspirations with me now in Singapore, for whom Australia has much to be grateful:

- . our long-standing bilateral relationship underpinning our partnerships and strategic outlook in trade, defence, education and tourism;
- . our shared values of democracy, peace, progress, justice and equality - so openly and proudly declared on your national flag and coat of arms;
- . our united efforts in maintaining a secure and stable region;
- . our significant investment and belief in the vigour, resilience, and productivity of one another's economies and markets;

. and the dedication of our leaders and parliamentary delegations to promoting understanding and interest, so fundamental to sustaining our affinity and obligation to one another;

Of course, Singapore is home to many, many Australians:

. our expats, and transnationals who "follow the sun" around the globe;

. our willing diaspora who speak so fondly of their posting here;

. and, I believe, earlier this year, Asian expats ranked Singapore as the best place in the world to live:

. clean, healthy, safe - a wonderful mix of cosmopolitan modernity, and ancient Chinese, Malay and Indian cultures;

. I'm obliged to remind everyone however that Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra were also in the top ten - little comfort to a Queenslander, I might add!

Ladies and gentlemen, these ties, extensions and reciprocities are part of what constitutes our global citizenship, and our commitment, like yours:

. to developing our presence and influence in the international community,

. and to the principles of multilateralism.

For some years, Singapore has enjoyed a mature status as a world nation:

. as a republic, and parliamentary democracy;

. an active participant - and often an important initiator - in ASEAN, APEC, the Asia-Europe meeting, the Forum for East-Asia and Latin America, and the Asia Middle-East Dialogue;

. a keen ally to the United States

. and a member of the United Nations Security Council.

Twenty years ago, I got a glimpse of the UN's remarkable work:

. although only in a small way,

. as a member of Australia's delegation to the UN Commission on Human Rights,

. and as an observer at the meeting of the expert body overseeing the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

How lucky I was to have taken part in the United Nations, at a time when women's issues - Issues then central to my work, and always close to my heart - were being brought to the forefront of the world's consciousness.

I came to understand and respect enormously:

. the vital interaction between local and global initiatives;

. and the processes for consultation and decision-making that encouraged individuals to act.

As social, economic, cultural, environmental, and human rights issues increasingly challenge us as one, without deference to country borders:

- . our attention is revived in this global organisation,
- . its capacity and potential for united engagement and action;
- . and for Australia, the pathway it offers renewed ambitions of achieving future membership of the UN Security Council.

And, indeed, it was only a few weeks ago, that Australia and the European Union adopted what has been described as a "historic partnership agreement":

- . a pledge to work closely together on the global financial crisis;
- . a document that represents a genuine conviction by signatories in the efficacy of multilateral fora.

My friends, in 2005, as Governor of Queensland I was invited to celebrate 60 years of the UN.

The words of the Millennium Declaration that I quoted then resonate with even greater clarity and meaning now:

"the indispensable common house of the entire human family, through which we will seek to realise our universal aspirations for peace, cooperation, and development."

Mr President, I sincerely thank you for your hospitality today.