

Remarks by His Excellency His Excellency Federico Palomera Guez

Dr. K. Shanmugam, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Ambassador Tommy Koh

Distinguished guests ladies and gentlemen.

It is for me a pleasure to contribute to the launch of this III edition of the “Little Red Dot”, in the first place because it comes as a welcome departure from the normal role of a Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, who sometimes has the impression of being a strange hybrid between a midwife and a Funeral Director, as he is mainly concerned with saluting both new members of the Corps and departing ones. The important effect of such a function on the philosophical understanding of the transience of all things human notwithstanding, - *mataiotetes, mataiotetos kai panta mataiotetes*, - it is always refreshing to find oneself celebrating stability instead of transience, and I am therefore grateful to the organizers for this opportunity.

It is not my intention to compete with the authors of these essays on life in Singapore: the colleagues represented in the book have a fine pen and a finely tuned sensitivity and I would not venture to enter such competition, but please allow me to underline a few aspects of this “Little Red Dot”. Following AMBASSADOR Koh’s hallowed example, I would try to restrict these points to the magic number of three, a figure that is somehow pleasing to the human mind and that has the incomparable advantage of not inducing terminal boredom in any audience:

The Spanish and the Chinese are two peoples connected by a common affection to proverbs, the so called popular wisdom. It is indeed difficult to find a question that has not been studied and encapsulated by the lay philosophers of both cultures, and certainly the excellence of small things figures prominently among them. Spaniards say that excellent perfume comes in small bottles and, looking at Singapore, one could not but conclude that small is indeed beautiful, as the Republic has been able to maintain a balance between the old and the new, the built and the wild that would warrant the name of the “green dot”.

Secondly, Singapore has been able to turn into advantages all the circumstances that could be interpreted as disadvantages: Size, very limited natural resources, and a very enviable geographical situation. By a combination of ingenuity, wisdom imagination and a tenacious adherence to a set of principles, these unfavourable circumstances have been put to Singapore's advantage. The reliance and trust in International Law, the belief in its moral superiority following in the footsteps of Victoria, Soto and Suárez, has been the means for Singapore to punch above its weight and to be a valuable and valued member of the international community.

Thirdly, Singapore's ability to accept challenges and find a creative and working solution to them takes a leaf from Toynbee, who identifies this adequate response as the motor of History.

As a symbol of the preceding, Singapore, with wit and sense of humour, has been able to turn the tables on a phrase, "A little Red Dot" that was intended as term of derision and use it instead as a badge of honour and a symbol of the pride of the country and the importance of her achievements.

Thank you.