Singapore, 17 November 2004 – The Asia-Europe Foundation, the United Nations Development Fund For Women (UNIFEM) Singapore and the Singapore Council of Women’s Organisation (SCWO) are pleased to co-organise a public lecture on the topic of Gender Representation in Politics to be held on the grounds of the Asia Europe Foundation, 31 Heng Mui Keng Terrace, Singapore 119595 on 22nd November 2004 at 6pm.

On the panel for this lecture are: Ms Irene Ng, Member of Parliament for Tampines GRC and Dr Jennifer Lee, Nominated Member of Parliament, former President of SCWO. Dr Suzaina Kadir of the Department of Political Science at the National University of Singapore will chair the panel.

Ms Irene Ng reiterates the importance of this lecture, "The issue of gender representation is of increasing importance in the world and also in Singapore, as women get better-educated and want to have a say in how the society is structured and run. You cannot tell women that their views count, and yet not have their views adequately represented at the highest levels. It would be useful to explore the cross-cultural aspects and to see to what extent do "Asian values" - read patriarchy - play in women's under-representation in politics. If we want society to progress, with men and women engaged in nation-building, we must be prepared to think out of the gender boxes."

The primary speaker, Asst. Professor ANN-CATHRINE JUNGAR of the University College of Southern Stockholm, will be presenting a paper entitled “Unfinished Democracy: Gender equality and political representation in a comparative perspective.” In her paper, she writes that “the essence of democracy is that those who are affected by the decisions should be able to influence them.. based on the available figures, one may conclude that women are undoubtedly still marginalised in much political decision-making. The under-representation of women may imply that issues of particular importance for women are not given the requisite consideration since the multifold experience of women is not present in the political deliberations.

Asst. Prof. Jungar will be 8th lecturer to participate in the unique ‘Lecture Tours’ series under the "Cultures & Civilisations Dialogue” programme of the Asia-Europe Foundation. This series was conceptualised to allow leaders of opinion from each region the opportunity to tour the opposite region in delivering a lecture on issues of pertinence to both Asia and Europe. This lecture in Singapore will be the first of a series of lectures that she will deliver as she embarks on her Lecture Tour to Kuala Lumpur, Cebu and Yogyakarta.

Tisa Ng, President of SCWO and advisor to UNIFEM Singapore says, "In Singapore, women remain very under-represented in national leadership, even when compared to neighbouring countries. This means that 50% of the talent and ability available to us within our population is largely untapped at the highest policy levels. We need to understand why this is so, and to explore how this valuable resource can be better integrated."

The Cultures & Civilisations Dialogue programme of the Asia Europe Foundation was established last year with the realisation that many cultural and civilisational issues need to be addressed to promote understanding between the two regions of Asia and Europe, and also facilitate leaders of civil society meeting, interacting and engaging with one another and with audiences in the opposite regions. This programme is part of a counter-movement towards greater understanding to stem the so-called “rising tide” of intolerance and distrust in light of the discourse on a “Clash of Civilisations.” The most important argument arising from this examination of cultures and civilisations is that conflict need not be inevitable.

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