

SESSION V

STRENGTHENING CO-OPERATION BETWEEN LIBERALS AND DEMOCRATS FROM EUROPE AND ASIA

Chair: Dr. Buranaj Smutharaks, Democrat Party (Thailand)
Co-Chair: Mrs. Elly Plooij-Van Gorsel MEP, ELDR Group

An ELDR Perspective

Mr. Graham Watson MEP, Leader, ELDR Group

Mr. Watson said that he is grateful to have the opportunity to share with the group some thoughts about where this conference has led to and what it might say in the future because it seems that after two days of very fruitful discussions, there is a lot to learn from each other and a lot of work that could be done together. When looking at the idea of strengthening co-operation between liberal democrats from Europe and Asia, he said that one should start by celebrating what has already been achieved. He stressed that one must not underestimate what has been achieved in a relatively short time.

The ELDR party has been in existence for just over twenty five years, founded in 1976. CALD, on the other hand, has only been in existence for just under ten years, founded in 1993. So, already co-operation between the two federations is relatively new. What is remarkable, however, is that both have already achieved so much co-operation between them. And he said he would like to congratulate CALD and FNS, as well as thank the Millennium Democratic Party for all of their efforts to set this meeting up. He hopes that it will be the first of many, many meetings that will involve many people not just those around this table but many people from CALD member parties and many people from the ELDR.

He said that he is very pleased that CALD has chosen such an appropriate logo because it seems to that this logo symbolizes what Europe calls the Asian handshake. It's the handshake, where one also presents his or her visiting cards to each other. And it's something that the ELDR feels appropriately symbolises the meeting, the coming together of liberals and democrats from Europe and from Asia.

He believes there are many issues that can be profitably discussed with each other. And he would draw the group's attention to M.R. Paribatra's speech to the Hitachi Young Leader's forum in Singapore which he has a copy of. He thinks that the address contains a very clear and appropriately liberal summary of the issues which could perhaps prove more fruitful as a basis for discussion. Clearly, there is a need to discuss issues of peace and security not just because of the situation here on the Korean peninsula but because of the situation over at the Taiwan Strait and the situation in a number of other areas as well.

Clearly, both federations could also fruitfully develop discussions on a liberal and democratic stance towards autocracy. He thinks particularly of the People's Republic of China, of Myanmar, of Singapore and a number of European countries where regimes still exist which are anything but democratic, in particular, Albania and some countries in the Eastern frontiers of Europe

Discussions could also take on issues of the environment, whether it has to do with the cleanliness of the air that both continents breathe or the water that both continents drink or of the protection afforded by the ozone layer, which keeps away harmful rays of the sun.

He thinks as well that both federations could usefully pursue discussions about internationally organised crime and the ways in which crime afflicts communities on both of continents in addition to posing a major challenge to some of national governments.

And he thinks that ELDR and CALD might deepen discussion on an area which has perhaps been overlooked in the meetings thus far. This is on the idea of community. He explained that when he talks about community, he means almost in the sense of the third slogan of the French revolution where they talked about Liberté, Egalité, and Fraternité. Fraternité sounds a little male chauvinist in today's world but community is perhaps a word which would adequately replace it.

He further explained that when he talks about developing a discussion of the liberal idea of community, what he means by it, is what can be done through government to give people more control over their own lives and to enable them to develop to the greatest possible degree, their own potential because human society will only meet its potential if each of the individuals, which compose it, are free to develop on their own. So those are some issues, which he thinks, both ELDR and CALD might focus on in the coming meetings.

Mr. Watson proceeded by talking about the forum at which this can be developed. He believes that bilateral contact between Asia and Europe is very good and potentially very fruitful. But a multilateral forum also exists in the shape of the Liberal International, whose news letter was distributed this morning. And he said that he is one, who has noted with great pleasure the growth of Asian participation in the Liberal International, in particular, including the Liberal International's decision to hold an executive meeting in Taipei not very long ago. He hopes that it will not be too far in the future when the Liberal International might decide to hold a full blown conference, one of its bi-annual conferences in Asia.

Within the Liberal International, there are a number of liberal democratic foundations. The Friedrich Naumann Stiftung is by far the most prominent. There are also liberal foundations in the United Kingdom, from the Netherlands, from

Sweden working together occasionally with the National Democratic Institute in the United States. And he is quite pleased to see that there are moves at least in one Asian country that is Taiwan to establish a liberal foundation there. He thinks it could be of interest to look at how these foundations could work together further to promote liberal democratic ideas. And perhaps as a thought which comes out of that, how ELDR and CALD might promote greater contact between young people, and by that he means no insult to anybody in the room but if both organisations are able to bring together no people who are in their early 20s then there is a need to probably do more to consolidate co-operation in the future among liberals and democrats than any other effort that must be made.

Most European Union countries, most of the countries all together are involved in ASEM and he thinks that as liberals and democrats in ASEM, the Asia-Europe Meeting framework, could be looked at as a possible framework for co-operation. He thinks that the need for ASEM was thrown into sharp relief by the events of the Sept 11 2001. He pointed out, however, that if he looks at ASEM, he does not find an established mechanism for an urgent exchange of views between leaders of European countries and leaders of their Asian partners nor does he find the kind of level of trust that is necessary between

very helpful when it said that human rights are not a reward for development but they are critical in achieving it. Within the third pillar, the social and cultural pillar, Asia and Europe could move to establish some form of more structured contact between NGOs from Asia and from Europe but in particular move towards boosting the role of the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Meeting, the last of which took place in Manila at the end of August.

He said he wonders whether liberal democrats might not move to establish a formal liberal democratic caucus within that meeting and perhaps even aim to hold liberal democratic meeting a day or to before the next ASEM parliamentary framework so as to maximize the effectiveness of liberals and democrats within that forum. In the same way, ELDR and CALD could do a lot to build on the work of the Asia-Europe Foundation by enlarging the network to include think-tanks, to give it a decent budget, and to allow it to carry out more of the excellent activities which it organises and which a number around this table have been involved in because he said he had the pleasure of meeting them there. So, he thinks within the ASEM framework, a lot can be done.

He would, however, offer one word of caution and that is that the group should recognise that the ASEM is not the sum total of relations between Asia and Europe. There are other important countries in Asia like Taiwan and India and there equally important countries in Europe which are not members of the EU and are, thus, currently outside ASEM. Therefore, there is a need to look at other ways of developing co-operation between the two continents. Although it is not and should not be a matter for party politics, one of the things that he would be interested in pursuing would be the possibility of holding the 2008 Olympics in China and in Taiwan, in a similar way to the way that the World Cup football was held between South Korea and Japan.

He asked, "What can we do in terms of practical steps to develop our co-operation?" One of the things that he is very pleased to commit the ELDR group to doing is towards working on issues of human rights and other issues of concern to liberal democrats in Asia and, in particular, continuing their work in occupying an important position or a series of important positions in the European Parliament's discussions on relations with Asia. The ELDR's huge efforts, spearheaded by Cecilia Malmström, to make sure that whenever the EU is signing association agreements with third countries, it insists on a proper application of Article Two, which is the article that deals with human rights and democratic freedom.

He said that he thinks there are other practical steps that could be taken as well. The first is an offer, which he is very pleased to make this afternoon on behalf of the ELDR group, that the group could twice a year for a six week period take two trainees, young persons from CALD parties, who could come and work in the European Parliament. They would need to take two at a time but they could take perhaps two young people from Asian sister parties for a six week period in the

Autumn and another two for a six week period in the Spring. If the parties are able to finance their travel to Western Europe, they will finance their stay there to make sure that they are given an interesting program of political activity while with the ELDR.

He said that they might also think of building up an exchange of information between the ELDR Secretariat and the CALD Secretariat on activities and contacts between the two bodies so that, for example, if Saumura Tioulong meets an ELDR colleague, Chris Huhne at a meeting in Brussels, there is some logo, some record of the meeting. So when people carry out further meetings, they can know what has gone before and what it is that they can build on so that there is no reinvention of the wheel each time there is a meeting.

At the same time, he thinks that ELDR would be very pleased to offer to expand a facility that they currently have with the Sam Rainsy Party, which is the case of being in each other's mailboxes so that every time the Sam Rainsy Party puts out a press release, the ELDR gets a copy and every time they put out a press release, the Sam Rainsy Party gets a copy of it. Anything along those lines can be helpful for contact.

He also suggested to take note of the two excellent CALD publications, the Political Dimensions of the Asian Crisis and Democratic Transitions in Asia, with the end in view of perhaps at the possibility of working on another publication, a publication on liberalism in today's world, in which the organisations might solicit contributions from writers, contributors from other Asian member parties and contributors from Europe. He said that all of these could be small but practical and fruitful steps towards deepening the co-operation between ELDR and CALD.

A CALD Perspective

Rep. Florencio Abad, President, Liberal Party of the Philippines

Mr. Abad said that the speed and intensity by which events in a country or region affect or even influence those of another are testaments of how globalization has made countries more interdependent in today's world. As such, those issue which countries originally considered as domestic having now increasingly become regional and international.

Recognizing these developments, countries and regions have decided to bond together and work closely with one another in order to effectively deal with common concerns. Thus while there is a proliferation of regional grouping in the international arena, there is a complimentary effort for these regional groupings to closely interact with one another.

One such interaction of regions is between Asia and EU. The EU, as stipulated in its 1994 "Towards a New Asia Strategy" and reiterated in its 2001 communication entitled "EU and Asia: A Strategic Framework for co-operation", has recognized

that Asian countries are their crucial economic and political partners. For its part, Asia has likewise acknowledged the importance in working closely with the EU as expressed in the individual country co-operation agreements with them.

An arrangement between Asia and the EU that has gained in prominence is the Asia-Europe Meeting or the ASEM involving selected countries in East and Southeast Asia and the fifteen EU member countries. This inter-regional dialogue has made significant achievements through regular meetings of the economic and finance ministers and Heads of States, which resulted in joint programmes and declarations, as well as through the projects administered by the Asia-Europe Foundation, an office created to ensure intellectual, cultural and people to people exchanges.

As with other indirect regional undertakings, however, these efforts are not all encompassing, focused only on a few if not broad areas of concern and not intensive, focused only on consensually identified non-sensitive issues. Hence, there is much room for the establishment of other mechanisms of co-operation particularly for those concerns that are not given attention. This current state of affairs more than serves as an impetus to encourage like minded political organizations such as the CALD and the ELDR Party to come together and work on a common political agenda of co-operation.

Founded in 1993 to encourage common understanding of basic principles of liberal democracy and to facilitate appropriate responses to problems of common concern in Asia, CALD today is a network of liberal and democratic parties from countries in South, Southeast and East Asia. On the other hand, the ELDR, which was founded in 1976 by democratic parties in the then European Community to protect and promote the rights and freedoms of the individual, now consists of forty nine political parties from members states of the EU, as well as candidate countries from Eastern and Southern Europe and is the third largest parliamentary group in the European Parliament.

The main objective of this presentation is to specify areas of concern between CALD and the ELDR based on the prevailing political, economic issues in South, South East Asia and East Asia, the three sub-regions represented in CALD, and to recommend strategies that will ensure and sustain this co-operation.

Mr. Abad explained that due to the size and diversity of Asia as well as dividing degrees of political, economic development of the countries in it, any attempt to present the political and economic issues that prevail in the region requires that it be tackled by sub-region. In line with this, first to be presented are those in South Asia followed by Southeast Asia and then East Asia.

Foremost among the concerns of South Asia is the continuing tension between India and Pakistan over Kashmir which has already reached a nuclear scale. Equally eminent is the threat to regional stability posed by terrorism, religious

fundamentalism and ethnic conflict particularly for Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. Both these concerns pointed the primacy of political and security issues in the sub-region, which pose a threat to civilian rights and fuel human rights violations. Consequently these issues affect the region's economic development. In particular, they have limited the efficacy of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC), a platform which aims to accelerate the socio-economic development of the region. Its plans of establishing a SAARC free trade area, a means by which it could be integrated into the international economic arena, remains unachievable under the current circumstances. With this economic goal which ultimately aims to raise the standard of living in the SAARC member countries on hold for now efforts of poverty alleviation continue to remain as a top priority for South Asia.

In South East Asia, despite posting modest growth rates, the countries in the sub-region have not completely recovered from the Asian Financial Crisis. As such, efforts of recovery are still high in its government's list of priorities. On the other hand, the ensuing calls for transparency and accountability due to the crisis led to the introduction of good governance principles and even laid the foundation for democratisation in Indonesia. Meanwhile, while economic prosperity in the sub-region has resulted in the introduction of democratic principles for a number of countries, others such as Malaysia and Singapore continue to have restricted regimes. The case of Burma, in particular, illustrates how the state limits civil and political rights. As such, democratisation and human rights in Southeast Asia are important issues that also require close attention. Finally, security has increasingly become a concern in Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia. Originally dismissed as small sporadic and local criminal acts, the threat of terrorist activity was astoundingly felt in the recent bombings in Bali, Indonesia where around one hundred ninety people died and more than three hundred injured.

For East Asia, China's growing economic power and political dominance and its effect on its neighbours requires close attention. In particular ensuring the economy of Hong Kong and Macao under the one country, two systems principle, as well as the right to self determination of Taiwan should be safeguarded. Another area of concern that should be monitored is developments in the Korean peninsula where significant progress has already been made under Kim Dae Jung's Sunshine Policy. Engaging North Korea however, particularly with its recent pronouncement of harbouring nuclear weapons remains uncertain, bringing it to the forefront of discussion.

Noting the political economic concerns that were enumerated, Mr. Abad said that there are four key areas of co-operation between CALD and ELDR which can be undertaken. First is on security, particularly against terrorism. The social impact of the recent Bali tragedy as well as in parts of South Asia should more than compel CALD and ELDR to come together and cooperate to help address such a scourge. The organisations, however should advocate for a peaceful and

diplomatic solution, which address not just the urgent and pressing concern at hand but more importantly, the underlying roots of extremism that increasingly manifest itself in terroristic acts. In the interim, while special precautions are being instituted to prevent the occurrence of such acts, CALD-ELDR should ensure that these policies are not used as a pretext to stifle legitimate dissent, undermine human rights and hinder the advancement of democracy and liberalism. This has particular resonance in this region where a number of pro-democracy movements are struggling to bring about more tolerant and inclusive societies in respective countries.

A second area would be in promoting liberal and democratic values and establishing and strengthening the institutions that give life to these values in the everyday life of people in the Asian region. Indeed, significant progress has been made in select countries in the region with the introduction or reintroduction of democratic governance. Nevertheless, the threat of reversal exists in some countries, particularly those facing unmitigated poverty, where income and equality, ethnic or religious strife have fostered social divisions and wars. The experience of ELDR in Europe, in general, in democratisation can be valuable and instructive for those in Asia struggling along this difficult process keeping in mind that because of the peculiar conditions of countries in the region, liberal democracy may manifest itself differently from how liberal democracy presently obtains in Europe.

The third area is necessarily related to the second area in terms of being able to give meaning and substance to democratic institution building by providing for its economic foundation. I refer to the areas of free trade and investment, debt relief and development aid. CALD and ELDR should work together to make more free trade possible. The continuing tariff imposed on agricultural products and the extension of the provision of generous subsidies is already pushing impoverished farmers in developing countries out of the market. More and more farmers in developing countries are beginning to be convinced that initiatives such as “everything but arms”, instead, of seeking to mitigate poverty are, in fact, perpetuating it. Another area that has proved beneficial to poor countries is debt relief. CALD and ELDR can work together to expand its initiative to cover more poor countries and continue to link this effort to programs of poverty alleviation, good governance and economic reforms. Finally, CALD and ELDR can work together to bring about increases in development assistance especially in meeting the basic needs of poor people in the region.

The fourth and perhaps most important area of co-operation is in promoting mutual awareness and understanding between Asia and Europe starting with each and everyone’s respective liberal and democratic parties. Stereotypes of both regions still abound and continue to serve as barriers in promoting understanding between the regions and the countries in them. CALD and ELDR could, thus, help in this important task by raising the profile of Asia in Europe and, at the same time, Europe in Asia.

The four proposed areas of concern and their objectives, according to Mr. Abad, present CALD and ELDR with a wide array of roles and responsibilities. Bearing this in mind, ensuring and sustaining the co-operation between the two require a balanced set of strategies. Firstly, there is a need to agree on a focused, systematic and sustained program or common action agenda that will allow CALD and ELDR to maintain open and constant communication between both organisations through meetings and newsletters or the internet in any co-operation across regions especially with our unique and distinct histories and cultures, the importance of exchange of information and inform understanding of each other's regions cannot be overemphasized.

Secondly, there is a need to put in place a mechanism for person to person encounters not only amongst parliamentarians but also with up and coming young leaders, researchers and scholars through seminars, workshops, immersion programs and internship programs as earlier mentioned by Mr. Watson. Both organisations can even explore the idea of a virtual academy wherein the young and our upcoming leaders can gain from the intellectual resources and practical political wisdom of each other's respective organisations and members.

Thirdly, to facilitate and sustain this exchange and projects, there is a need to lay the supporting infrastructure. For CALD, this would mean the further strengthening of the Secretariat's capacity to carry out these new functions of support in this regional exchange.

Lastly, there is a need to hold regular annual meetings to follow through on these activities and programmes and agree on future undertakings. Thank you.

A Japanese Perspective

Mr. Tohimasa Yamada MP, Democratic Party of Japan

Mr. Yamada said that he would like to talk about two things. One is on Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA) for Asian countries and second is on the concept of a world federation, which they are now discussing in their party. Last year, he recounted he was in charge of inspecting and checking Japanese ODA, which ten billion dollars every year worldwide and this is the largest amount in the world.

Firstly, he said he went to China to see how Japanese ODA is being used there. Japan is giving three billion US dollars every year to China and, so far, fifty billion US dollars has gone there in ten years. What struck him most about this trip is a case in Beijing, where when he visited the new airport, which is supported by Japanese ODA, incidentally the Shanghai airport, many highways and bridges are too, there was no signboard at all showing their gratitude to the Japanese people. Thus, he talked to the Japanese ambassador to China about this and

scolded him why there was no such acknowledgement. The Ambassador said that nobody knows why. Mr. Yamada, therefore, instructed him to communicate this with the Chinese government and for the Ambassador to show him the announcement indicating Japanese assistance to construct new airport. This, in any case, he reported to the Japanese Congress.

Mr. Yamada felt that it was very strange because it was huge amount of money. The project costs three billion US dollars and there was no sign saying thanks whatsoever. Thus, the Japanese ambassador talked to the Chinese government and asked for a sign board to show their appreciation to the Japanese government and people. After three months, Mr. Yamada said that they showed them a small sign board near staircase, in fact, behind the staircase so that nobody could see.

He continued by picking up from Ms. Hsiao's description of two levels of Chinese society. He said that if one goes to Shanghai, one sees a totally different story compared to other parts of the country, where people are very poor and in need of assistance from Japan. It was this that motivated him to instruct Congress to drastically change their ODA philosophy to China. Last year, they cut by thirty percent their budget to China.

One more important concern in China is their environmental problem. If one goes to Beijing or Shanghai, one cannot see the blue sky at all because there is so much, heavy air pollution. And this pollution is actually affecting Japan. He said that his hometown, Hiroshima, which is in the southern part of Japan, boasts of very beautiful pine trees in its mountains. Due to the acid rain from China, however, almost all these pine trees have died now. Thus, Japan has a very specific project in China aimed at preventing air pollution.

Mr. Yamada then talked about their ODA in Thailand. In Bangkok, Japan has a very big project worth seven hundred million US dollars. This is to build a very big sewage plant. He said he visited Thailand for three days to check on this project and was disappointed to note after talking to a number of senators that the project is very questionable and was considered not good for the people of Thailand.

He recounted that he endeavoured to talk to the people in the surrounding villages and a number of newspaper reporters. About 20 reporters told him that the project is embroiled in a bribery case for about five years already. One newspaper reporter even wrote repeatedly about the bribery involved in this case. This totally runs counter to the principles of Japanese ODA, which are not to continue to give assistance: (1) in case of bribery and (2) when it leads to the destruction of the environment.

He explained further that the Japanese embassy should be able research how the project got involved in the bribery case of a politician. The thing is they are

not able to do so. He said that already they have provided six percent of the funding.

He informed the group that the project it turns out led to the disposal of one million tons of sea water per day. And this was dumped on a community, where shell farming is a huge industry, thereby, disrupting their production. About sixty thousand people were affected. He said that when he visited the village about one hundred villagers automatically came to see him. It was an instant meeting. They asked him why the Japanese government allowed such a stupid thing to happen. He said that when he came back to Congress, he discussed this with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for about an hour in the budget committee hearing. He said that they really need to change their policy in a drastic manner.

Mr. Yamada said that Japan's ODA policy is actually a political problem because the Liberal Democratic Party is supported by very big construction firms. These construction companies earn about ten billion dollars every year all over the world. In order to sustain this, they ask the embassies or political leaders to continue to make roads, airports and big plants. Unfortunately, the ODA does not go to the people, who really need it. Thus, he argued that it is important that they change their philosophy and work on the ability to secure the right information from the right. He said he is sorry to say this but their embassies are not very good at the moment.

Mr. Yamada informed the group that he was born in Hiroshima and is elected as representative of Hiroshima. As everyone knows, he said, Hiroshima is the first city in the world to experience the atomic bomb. Nearly two hundred thousand people died at one time including children and mothers. He said that his family and friends have had a lot of experience with the after effects of the atomic bomb. After ten, twenty and thirty years, they have developed diseases as such leukaemia and about one hundred thousand people died gradually year by year. Even this year, he said, there are about one thousand people, who died from leukaemia in the Hiroshima prefecture. Thus, it is inherent in the people in Hiroshima especially for the politician representing Hiroshima to strongly believe in pursuing eternal peace. He believes it is his destiny to work for peace as a congressman.

In line with this, he said that a group of politician in the Democratic Party started to talk about a so-called World Federation. This is something similar to the military of the US Federal government. In the US, not all states have a military. They, thus, envision a world with one government and every country has to give up its military forces. In the case of Japan, for instance, their Constitution provides that they will never ever have an army because the Japanese people have no right to fight.

This is indeed a very strange constitution. It was General McArthur, who wrote the Japanese constitution. During that time, the American army occupied Japan, thus, there was no need for a separate army.

Mr. Yamada said that, in any case, given that their Constitution is such, they need to endeavour to seek internal peace as a nation. In this regard, they would like to discuss more with the EU the idea of the NATO serving as the one single army and each country giving up its military forces. And this is what they are going to do in the next ten years or twenty years.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra MP, Chairman CALD

M.R. Paribatra said that it has been a great honour and pleasure to participate in the first CALD-ELDR Meeting. He said that he found the discussions in the last couple of days to be very very fruitful and thus, shares everyone's golden sentiments. He believes that these discussions were liberally punctuated with Asia-Europe sense of humour and that was a very good sign indeed.

He echoed the sentiments that there are many many things CALD and ELDR could learn from each other and to do with each other. He hopes that everyone has had the time to put down all the suggestions that have been made orally during this session. He believes that there are a number of very relevant issues which have not been fully or more comprehensively covered in the two days but for the sake of time.

He thanked, on behalf of CALD, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea for its hospitality, the Millennium Democratic Party and the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung for the organisation of this conference, to our friends and colleague from CALD, and everybody. He also thanked Mr. Graham Watson, who has collaborated with CALD admirably, as well as the staff who have made this conference such a wonderful experience. Thank you very much.

Mr. Kim, Guen Tae MP, Millennium Democratic Party

Mr. Kim began his closing statement by apologising for the fleeting attendance of Korean MPs, who are very busy because they have presidential elections in two months. He said he is very happy to have been part of the provoking discussions about what like-minded believers in freedom and democracy can and should do together for the political and economic prosperity in Asia and Europe in the Twenty First century. He deeply thanked the Naumann Foundation for giving them such an honourable chance to participate.

North Korea has admitted that the nuclear weapons development program does exist and it has heightened tensions on the Korean peninsula. The silver lining however is that all the interested parties, including North Korea, the United States, South Korea, Japan and China agree that the nuclear problem must be resolved peacefully. It takes patience and dialogue to resolve the issue. There is a big chance that a quick, hasty decision to nullify the agreed framework in Geneva and suspend the light water nuclear reactor project would only lead to deepening tension and possible crisis on Korean peninsula. We must not do so. Peaceful resolution of the nuclear problem requires proactive efforts by all of you, CALD and ELDR members, who represent the body of freedom and democracy in Asia and Europe. He said that he sincerely calls for strong support in this matter.

He gave his special thanks to the guardians of democracy in Europe. When Asia was suffering on the Draconian dictatorship, the liberal democrats are the strongest of allies to us. He said that they will never forget. As the conference comes to a close, he said that the group should reassure that they have been all really good friends and strongest allies to each other. And that they love and respect each other. This alone, he believes, gives the group a good enough reason to remain hopeful for a better future. Thank you very much.