

Date Published: 24 Oct 2005

His Excellency, Mr Andreas Michaelis,
German Ambassador to Singapore

Mr Manfred Schmoelz
President of the Singapore-German Chamber of Industry and Commerce (SGC)

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

It gives me great pleasure to be present this morning at this "Second Renewable Energies Symposium" organised by the Singapore-German Chamber of Industry and Commerce. Energy and the environment are inextricably linked. Economic development is often accompanied by increased energy consumption. While pollution from the combustion of fossil fuels for energy production has largely been kept in check through sensible regulations, controlling carbon dioxide emissions remains a major pressing environmental challenge because of the threat of global climate change.

Less Carbon Intensive Power Generation

3 In Singapore, we have moved away from the more carbon-intensive fuel oil to the less carbon-intensive and more efficient natural gas for power generation. The proportion of natural gas in our fuel mix has grown from 19% in 2000 to more than 70% this year.

4 To help companies and the public improve energy efficiency and reduce energy consumption, my Ministry introduced three new energy efficiency initiatives that are estimated to reduce up to 190,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions by 2012 and help us achieve our target of 25% improvement in carbon intensity between 1990 and 2012.

5 One of the initiatives is the \$10m Energy Efficiency Improvement Assistance Scheme, or EASe for short, which is administered by the National Environment Agency. EASe co-funds companies who wish to engage engineering specialists to identify measures that can be implemented to improve energy efficiency, reduce energy costs and carbon emissions.

6 The scheme is in its early phase but already about \$150,000 in funding assistance has been committed. This is expected to achieve \$1.5 million in annual energy savings for its applicants and a reduction of 7,000 tonnes of carbon emissions for Singapore. I would urge more companies to consider the funding scheme to improve their efficiency and to contribute towards environmental sustainability in energy use.

Outlook for Renewable Energy in Singapore

7 Renewable energy is a sustainable energy option that Singapore is considering. My Ministry has been collaborating with government economic agencies to look into ways to promote environmental services and products. Our partner agency, the Economic Development Board, recently announced alternative energy as a new growth area for our economy as part of our overall push to groom a world-class environmental industry here. Within the domain of alternative energy, it is focusing its efforts on solar, biomass, hydrogen and energy services.

8 Particularly for solar, we believe that Singapore, though a “newbie” in the market, has significant competitive advantages that will differentiate us from other countries. Firstly, we are close to emerging markets. As photovoltaics or PV technologies become less expensive and oil prices continue to rise, the “sunbelt” countries along the equator would be among the first to adopt PV electricity on a commercial basis. Singapore is well-positioned to serve this market.

9 Secondly, Singapore’s world-class semiconductor industry has a good supplier base of equipment and chemical suppliers. We also have substantial capabilities in semiconductor manufacturing automation. Thirdly, Singapore is the top country in Asia for intellectual property protection.

10 My Ministry is working with the EDB on some impactful initiatives for Singapore to become a significant player in the solar industry. For the immediate future, this will include strengthening our technology base through establishing new solar R&D centres in our educational institutions and in the private sector. We intend to build a skilled manpower base through new educational programmes.

Energy Smart Buildings

11 Energy efficiency will remain a key strategy towards our energy sustainability in the future. With rising energy prices, there is growing interest among stakeholders to design and construct environmentally sustainable buildings that not only save money and reduce harmful emissions, but also offer good working environment for its occupants.

12 The National Environment Agency is presently working with the Energy Sustainability Unit (ESU) of the National University of Singapore on the development of a Building Energy Efficiency Label system to assist the building sector to better manage and take control of their energy performance.

13 The Labeling system will recognise buildings that are in the top 25 percentile of the total cohort of buildings ranked according to energy efficiency performance. In addition to energy performance, these buildings will be monitored to ensure that their indoor environmental qualities, such as air quality, ventilation, thermal comfort and lighting are good.

14 By the end of the year, office buildings that achieve building energy efficiency will be labelled an “Energy Smart Building®”. Developed through a comprehensive study of energy performance among Singapore’s buildings, the “Energy Smart Building” label adopts useful features from the US-EPA Building Energy Star system and the Euro-Label of the Euro-Prosper programme under the European Energy Performance of Building Directive.

15 Energy efficiency makes economic and environmental sense. Singapore will do its part in enhancing the energy efficiency of all sectors. The Building Energy Efficiency Labeling Programme is a major initiative in this direction. It will also augment the Green Mark for Buildings programme that was launched by the Building Construction Authority recently, which raises environmental awareness and promotes sustainable development in the construction industry.

16 I would hence like to encourage all building owners and managers to come forward and support this labeling scheme. You can set for yourselves performance targets and track your buildings’ progress in efficiency development.

Conclusion

17 Singapore will continue to seek sustainable energy solutions to help us reduce the environmental impact of energy production and use. We are committed to move this agenda forward by involving and working with both the community at large as well as businesses.

18 Achieving a less carbon intensive economy will also create opportunities for businesses. I understand that the concept of today’s initiative by the Singapore-German Chamber of Industry and Commerce is to combine a symposium for renewable energies with a business matching event, highlighting the importance and the challenge in finding and developing alternative sources for sustainable energy solutions. The SGC is to be lauded for this initiative and I wish you every success in this endeavour.

19 In closing, I wish all present a fruitful exchange of ideas. To all our friends and visitors from overseas, I hope you will have an enjoyable stay in Singapore.

20 Thank you.