STATEMENT OF CONCERN

We, the undersigned, write to express our disappointment at the choice of Prof Thio Li Ann as a speaker for the Human Rights Day seminar hosted by the EEAS European Union Delegation to Singapore.

It is a matter of public record that Prof Thio: -

1. believes the LGBT community is not entitled to the protections of human rights with respect to issues of sexuality, even between consenting homosexual adults.

   In 2007, Prof Thio argued, in the Parliament of Singapore, in favour of the continued criminalization of adult consensual same sex relations in Singapore. She asserted that:

   “Human rights are universal, like prohibitions against genocide. Demands for ‘homosexual rights’ are the political claims of a narrow interest group masquerading as legal entitlements….You cannot make a human wrong a human right.”

2. deliberately used graphic language to engender repugnance against homosexual adults in her 2007 speech:

   “Anal-penetrative sex is inherently damaging to the body and a misuse of organs, like shoving a straw up your nose to drink. The anus is designed to expel waste; when something is forcibly inserted into it, the muscles contract and cause tearing; fecal waste, viruses carried by sperm and blood thus congregate, with adverse health implications like ‘gay bowel syndrome’, anal cancer. ‘Acts of gross indecency’ under 377A also covers unhygienic practices like “rimming” where the mouth comes into contact with the anus. Consent to harmful acts is no defence – otherwise, our strong anti-drug laws must fall as it cannot co-exist with letting in recreational drugs as a matter of personal lifestyle choice.”

3. characterizes attempts by LGBT activists and their allies to promote non-discrimination on grounds of gender and sexuality as a conspiratorial attempts to subvert law, order, community and public morality.

   In the same parliamentary speech of 2007, she asserts that: -

   “Homosexual activists often try to infiltrate and hijack human rights initiatives to serve their political agenda, discrediting an otherwise noble cause to protect the weak and poor.”
And again,

“Conversely, homosexual activists lobby hard for a radical sexual revolution, waging a liberal fundamentalist crusade against traditional morality. They adopt a step-by-step approach to hide how radical the agenda is.”

4. continues to speak of homosexuality as a “gender identity disorder” from which individuals can be “reoriented” and characterizes any scientific research which calls her perspective into question as “politically pseudo science”.

The EEAS should note that she explicitly endorses a position which runs counter to the professional standards of internationally recognized mental health associations including the World Health Organisation, the American Psychiatric Association, American Psychological Association, The Royal College of Psychiatrists in the UK, and the Chinese Psychiatric Association amongst others.

An invited speaker is a position of honour and prestige and conveys significant legitimacy to the speaker. With this in mind, we are concerned about the underlying principles and values being communicated to the public with the EEAS’s invitation to Prof Thio to speak at a Human Rights event, given her public statements against the LGBTQ community. Under these circumstances, some may construe this invitation as an implicit endorsement of the speaker and her views by the organizer.

Article 13 of the EC Treaty and the European Union’s Charter of Fundamental Rights explicitly prohibits discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. Moreover, the Commissioner for Human Rights recommends that authorities in Council of Europe member states should:

1. Take a strong public position against violations of the human rights of LGBT persons and promote respect on issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity, for example through human rights education and awareness-raising campaigns.
2. Take steps to encourage factual, objective and professional reporting by the media on LGBT persons and issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

The European External Action Service lists one of its key roles as “Human rights defender”.

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We are profoundly disappointed and we urge the EU and the EEAS to explain how inviting Prof Thio as a speaker for a Human Rights Day seminar is consistent with its own stated role as a defender and advocate of human rights.

Signed,

2. Alan Seah 37. Joe Wong 73. Seelan Palay
3. Alex Au 38. Joel Tan 74. Sharon Pereira
5. Alina Ng 40. Jolovan Wham 76. Song Jiyoun
6. Alisson Kumar 41. Joshua Chiang 77. Sun Koh
7. Alvin Tan 42. Kamal Ramdas 78. Su-Yin Mah
8. Benjamin Xue 43. Karen T 79. Tan Chui Hua
9. Bjorn Yeo 44. Kate Tan 80. Tania De Rozario
12. Caryn Tan 47. Kenneth Chee 83. Teng QianXi
13. Celestine Alvina Sun 48. Kenneth Tan 84. Teo Elaine
14. Celine Lim 49. Kirsten Han 85. Teo Soh Lung
15. Charles Tan 50. Kirsten Tan 86. Teo Youyenn
17. Christine Chia 52. Lim Chong Ming 88. Think Centre
18. Dana Lam 53. Lim Jialiang 89. Thomas Ng
19. David Lee 54. Lisa Li 90. Trevy
20. Emily Heng 55. Lucy Davis 91. Tricia Leong
22. Faeza Sirajudin 57. Mah Chia Chu 93. Wong Chee Meng
23. Fikri Alkhatib 58. Mathia Lee 94. Wong Pei Chi
25. Gary Lim 60. Miak Siew 96. Yuyun
27. Goh Li Sian 62. Ng Yisheng 98. Jacqueline Tan
28. Gwyneth Teo 63. Nigel Ng 99. Max Chen
29. H.M. LEOW 64. Otto Fong 100. Jen Crawford
30. Jaclyn Chan 65. Ovidia Yu
31. Jacob Ma 66. Pam Oei
32. Jayet Ng 67. Rachel Zeng
33. Jean Chong 68. Raksha M
34. Jennifer Teo 69. Reilly Phanes
35. Jeremy Tay 70. Sabrina Lee

Thanapal

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