



AMBASSADE DE FRANCE À SINGAPOUR

*Liberté
Égalité
Fraternité*



EMBARGOED UNTIL APRIL 30, 2021
1430 HRS (GMT+8) / 0830 HRS (GMT+2)

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

THE LAW SOCIETY OF SINGAPORE AND THE PARIS BAR ASSOCIATION STRENGTHEN LEGAL COOPERATION AND CREATE NEW SYNERGIES

[Singapore, April 30, 2021] The Paris Bar Association, the Law Society of Singapore, Law Society Pro Bono Services and the Embassy of France in Singapore are pleased to announce new joint projects at a Conference attended by the Ambassador of France to Singapore, His Excellency Marc Abensour, the President of the Society of Singapore and Chairman of Law Society Pro Bono Services, Mr Gregory Vijayendran SC, and the President of the Paris Bar Association, Mr Olivier Cousi.

The projects unveiled at the Conference follow discussions initiated by the signing of a Cooperation Agreement between Paris Bar Association and Law Society of Singapore on January 17, 2020. This agreement formalised a special relationship between the two bar associations. The global pandemic did not dampen the enthusiasm for this enhanced collaboration.

Creative opportunities explored include training, innovation and legal tech, access to justice, in business law and, furthermore, the relations between the lawyers of both countries. In this context, a new “Paris-Singapore” International Commission was launched on April 30.

This new Commission will promote, through a training program, a dynamic dialogue between lawyers from Paris and Singapore. It will also provide legal practitioners a forum to exchange perspectives on their professional practice and encourage conversations on comparative law to mutually understand each other’s legal system.

This Conference also introduced the first-of-its-kind, unique collaborative cross-jurisdictional pro bono legal clinic between Singapore and France, established in Singapore for women victims of violence with a link to the French community.

Law Society Pro Bono Services, the Paris Bar through the *Barreau de Paris Solidarité* and the French Embassy are proud to work together towards crystallising their ongoing discussions on this project and

propose a new mechanism promoting access to justice to women victims of violence. In practice, a dedicated Support Centre run by qualified lawyers practising French law in Singapore will be opened, in coordination with the institutional partners. This will help addressing the increasing needs for protection of victims of violence in the wake of the global pandemic. As and when appropriate, Singapore lawyers will also work in tandem with their French counterparts to complement consultations requiring Singapore law advice.

It is envisaged that other new joint initiatives will emerge from the cooperation and enhanced interactions between the Paris and Singapore partners.

Law Society of Singapore President Gregory Vijayendran SC said: “Building on our MOU signing early last year, the Law Society team has savoured a regular rendezvous with our Paris Bar counterparts through online meetings. The conversations have been convivial, constructive and cooperative despite our COVID-19 challenges. By mutually encouraging one another during the dark days last year, we have been privileged to stand together in solidarity with our French brothers and sisters in law. Slowly but surely, we have built trust and confidence over time.

The time is now right for us to emerge out of the shadows cast by COVID-19 to tangibly collaborate with one another. There is no better way to start than establishing an International Commission to promote training, forums and a mutual exchange of perspectives at the Bar. I know French and Singaporean lawyers will be enriched and edified through this exchange between one of the well-established, leading continental Bar Associations in Europe hailing from a civil law tradition and a leading Asian law society coming from a common law tradition.

Yet the piece de resistance in the pilot projects initiated with the Paris Bar Association is the first of its kind, compassionate, cross-jurisdictional project by French lawyers and Singapore lawyers as facilitated by Law Society’s pro bono arm to provide access to justice to French-speaking women in Singapore who are victims of all kinds of violence. If we do not care enough as a society about the committing of external violence, we commit internal violence to our own souls. This collaboration is the fruit of what caring lawyers in France and Singapore can do.”

Mr Olivier Cousi, President of the Paris Bar, also declared: “This cooperation is the occasion of a first for the Paris Solidarity Bar and the Paris Bar’s Department of Access to Law and Justice, with the implementation, at the international level, of an access to the law system to fight against violence against women among the French community in Singapore, thanks to our partnership through the Law Society Pro Bono Services and to the support of the French representation in Singapore.

This will indeed be the first Pro Bono legal advice centre launched outside the country by our bar. I am particularly proud of this initiative because it is part of our long tradition of defending freedoms and rights across borders.

Without you nothing would have been possible It is because we share with the Law Society of Singapore an unwavering determination to support women who are victims of violence that this project will be possible. Because we are convinced that the advice of a lawyer can give confidence and avoid the worst.

In this respect, I would like to thank the lawyers registered at Paris Bar practising in Singapore who have responded to our call and have already agreed to participate in this adventure on a pro bono basis.”

- END -

About the Paris Bar

The Paris Bar, one of the largest Bar in Europe, comprises more than 30,000 lawyers out of nearly 70,000 in France. With a rich history spanning several centuries, it is chaired by the *Bâtonnier* and *Vice-Bâtonnier* of the Bar, who represent and speak for the Parisian lawyers in their dealings with the general public and the public authorities.

Alongside the Council of the Bar, which consists of 42 elected lawyers, the *Bâtonnier* and *Vice-Bâtonnier* of the Paris Bar deal with issues concerning the legal profession, its organisation and future, as well as justice and its administration, the protection of human rights, respect for public freedoms, and access to law and justice for all.

About the French Embassy in Singapore

The French Embassy in Singapore is monitoring the bilateral relations between France and Singapore on all major political, economic, cultural, academic, scientific defense and security issues as well as major multilateral issues, such as climate change and international financial regulation. The privileged links between our two countries have led us to discuss important sectors for the future that have shaped the world of tomorrow, such as digital revolution, sustainable city, connectivity, industry of the future and health. These are promising prospects for exchanges and collaborations between our two countries, which the Embassy of France has intended to encourage, promote and support by continuing to initiate them and manage the French team in Singapore. In this regard, the Embassy will aim at better promoting these important France's assets by helping to bring together research institutes, higher education institutions, companies and representatives of public authorities, in order to fully mobilise those energies for future French-Singapore projects.

The French Embassy in Singapore is also taking care of a more than 15,000 French citizens living in Singapore, this French community being one of the largest in Asia. This important mission also involves representatives and associations of French nationals, the French Chamber of Commerce, the French Foreign Trade Advisors, the Alliance Française and the French Schools in Singapore.

About the Law Society of Singapore

The Law Society of Singapore was established in 1967 under the Legal Profession Act. It carries out various statutory functions prescribed under the Act, including maintaining and improving the standards of conduct and learning of the legal profession in Singapore, the facilitation of the acquisition of legal knowledge by members of the legal profession, and protecting and assisting the public in all matters ancillary or incidental to the law.

About Law Society Pro Bono Services

Law Society Pro Bono Services is a Singapore-registered charity with IPC status. Its mission is to enable access to justice for all through legal awareness, advice and advocacy. Its programmes provide legal assistance to individuals in need as well as other community organisations that serve the needy and disadvantaged. With its programmes and vast network, it is also well equipped to develop new pro bono programmes to meet emerging needs in the community and support volunteers who are interested in pro bono legal work.

Find out more at www.lawsocprobono.org.

Press contact

Law Society of Singapore

GOH Wan Cheng
Director - Membership and External Relations
wancheng@lawsoc.org.sg
Mobile: +65 9658 0080

Paris Bar

Adrien CROZE
Director – Communications and Public Affairs Department
acroze@avocatparis.org
Mobile: +0033 (0)659 56 95 10