

The Asia Forum Report for 2009

2009 saw another successful year of well-attended, stimulating meetings. As in previous years we have received warm support from a number of distinguished individuals and opinion leaders from various interests and professional backgrounds, both from abroad and from New Zealand, in sharing their perspectives with Asia Forum. As usual the Forum continued to focus on off-the-record discussions and an exchange of views on numerous topical Asian issues that have occurred and developed during the year.

Asia Forum continues to strive and focus its effort on facilitating informed debate and the concerns of New Zealanders in engaging with Asia. The Forum gratefully values the opportunity to collaborate and cooperate with the *NZ Institute of International Affairs*, the *Wellington Regional Chamber of Commerce*, and the educational institutions and business organisations in Wellington. We also value the support and encouragement of the *Asia NZ Foundation*, the *Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade*, and the diplomatic community in Wellington.

Our 2009 programme continued the format of previous years with a range of high profile speakers from New Zealand and abroad leading the discussions. Our meetings were mostly held monthly in the offices of leading law firms *Bell Gully*, *Minter Ellison*, and at the *Hong Kong Shanghai Bank*, who generously provided refreshments as well as meeting facilities. Our gratitude also goes to *Catalyst IT Ltd* for hosting our website. Their hospitality, generosity and continuous support are much appreciated.

Highlights for the year

The highlights for 2009 were:

- **Rt Hon. Helen Clark**
MP and former Prime Minister, and head of the United Nations Development Programme speaking to the forum of her reflections of New Zealand and Asia.
- **Rt Hon. Sir Geoffrey Palmer**
Former Prime Minister, President of the Law Commission, and New Zealand's Representative on the International Whaling Commission (IWC) leading a discussion on conservation of whales and whaling issues in the 21st century.
- **Dr Surin Pitsuwan**,
Secretary General of ASEAN leading a discussion on Australian/New Zealand Economic Partnerships
- **Asia Forum Annual Dinner** – celebrating the Australian – New Zealand /ASEAN Free Trade Agreement held at the Grand Hall, Parliament House co-hosted by Hon. Mr Tim Groser, Minister of Trade and Hon. Mr Murray McCully, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Asia Forum is grateful for the generous support from Hon. Tim Groser, Minister of Trade and the Hon. Murray McCully, Minister of Foreign Affairs and also to Bell Gully for sponsorship of this significant event.

Vision for the future/looking ahead

Asia Forum has over the years been led and chaired by Farib Sos on a voluntary basis. He has been assisted by a group of colleagues including Colin Bell, Douglas Day, Sokha Mey, Tim Beal and recently by Andrew Beattie.

Asia Forum is embarking on 14 years of operation since it began in 1996 and it is a great challenge to sustain and maintain its activities. The Forum is keen to have additional input and support from interested individuals and organisations to ensure its continued existence, as a viable entity in providing a positive contribution towards New Zealand-Asia relations. *Asia Forum* would welcome additional support in any aspect from any individual or organisation to help sustain its activities in the years ahead.

Contribution

The *Asia Forum* has benefited greatly from the support of various organisations, notably and extensively from *Bell Gully*. However, there are certain running costs, especially pertaining to communications, which have to be covered. The *Asia Forum* is therefore seeking contributions from organisations or individuals who support our objectives and who wish to join us in providing an opportunity for informed and stimulating discussion of contemporary Asian issues amongst opinion leaders.

Those interested in considering such a contribution should contact Farib Sos, whose contact details are below.

Details of the Asia Forum programme can be found on the Asia Forum website at http://www.apri.ac.nz/Asia_Forum

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The meetings for 2009 were:

- 18 February **Rt Hon Helen Clark MP**
MP and former Prime Minister
NZ and Asia: Reflections of a former Prime Minister
- 26 March **Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Palmer**
Former Prime Minister, President of the Law Commission, and New Zealand's
Representative on the International Whaling Commission (IWC)
Conservation of whales in the 21st Century - Issues from a New Zealand perspective
- 8 April **H.E. Dr Chhieng Yanara**
Secretary General of the Cambodian Rehabilitation and Development Board (CRDB)
Overcoming adversity - Cambodia on the road to development
- 28 May **Dr Benny Pasaribu**
Chair, KPPU (Commission for the Supervision of Business Competition)
*NZ and Asia: Indonesia's search for a transparent, non-corrupt business environment -
Will the recent elections have an impact?*
- 24 June **H.E. Mr Munawar Saeed Bhatti**
High Commissioner for Pakistan
NZ and Asia: Pakistan - Afghanistan update
- 15 July **Mr John McKinnon**
Secretary of Defence
New Zealand and Asia: Defence review
- 19 August **Mr Graeme Harrison**
Founder and Chairman of ANZCO Foods Ltd., Chairman of the New Zealand
International Business Forum
Engaging with Asia: A business perspective in the current global financial situation
- 8 September **Dr Surin Pitsuwan**
Secretary-General of ASEAN
Australian/New Zealand ASEAN Economic Partnerships.
- 13 October **Asia Forum Annual Dinner**
Grand Hall, Parliament House
- 19 November **H.E. Mr Andrey Tatarinov**
Ambassador of the Russian Federation to New Zealand
Russia's experience and engagement with Central Asia.