

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SINGAPORE

09/04/2010

MFA Spokesman's comments on the meeting between MFA and Romanian Ambassador HE Aurelian Neagu

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SPOKESMAN'S COMMENTS

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) met HE Aurelian Neagu, the Romanian Ambassador to Singapore (who is based in Tokyo), in MFA on Friday 9 April 2010.

Ambassador Neagu was officially informed of the findings of the Coroner's Inquiry and the charges preferred by the Singapore Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) against Dr Silviu Ionescu. Ambassador Neagu was also officially informed that a Warrant of Arrest had been issued against Dr Ionescu and that Interpol had issued a Red Notice against him.

The Ambassador was told that while Singapore understood that Romania had taken the position that it could not compel Dr Ionescu to return as there was no Extradition Treaty between Singapore and Romania, Singapore's preference was nevertheless for Dr Ionescu to return to Singapore to face the charges.

MFA stressed that the Romanian Government had a clear moral obligation to do all it could to persuade Dr Ionescu to come back to Singapore to stand trial. This was in Romania's own interests as Dr Ionescu had seriously damaged Romania's international reputation.

Ambassador Neagu informed MFA that the Romanian Prosecutor's Office had started criminal investigations against Dr Ionescu on 2 February 2010 on "homicide by negligence, leaving the scene of an accident and false statements". Ambassador Neagu stressed that Romania was committed to seeing justice done. The Ambassador explained that Romania would need to conduct its own investigations against Dr Ionescu in accordance with Romanian law. He assured MFA that Romania would continue to cooperate fully with Singapore on the matter.

MFA thanked Ambassador Neagu for his assurances of Romania's commitment to see justice served. MFA reiterated that, as had been made clear on several previous occasions, Singapore would

cooperate with Romania to the fullest extent possible under our law to our common purpose of seeing that justice was served.

To this end, MFA formally informed the Ambassador that Singapore agreed to the establishment of a Joint Technical Working Group (or Rogatory Commission) as proposed by the Romanian side in a letter dated 24 February 2010, and conveyed to Singapore by the Romanian Embassy in Singapore only on 8 March (which was received on 10 March 2010.)

The Ambassador was told that Singapore could not have formally agreed to the proposal for a Joint Technical Working Group (or Rogatory Commission) before the Coroner had given his findings on 31 March 2010 as Singapore could not prejudge the outcome of the Coroner's Inquiry and the subsequent decision by our AGC to prefer charges against Dr Ionescu.

However, MFA noted that Singapore's Minister for Law had already replied on 16 March 2010 indicating our willingness to cooperate with the Romanian authorities to the fullest extent possible under our law.

MFA stressed that the Joint Technical Working Group (or Rogatory Commission) should be set up as soon as possible, and should start work by May 2010. If the Romanian side was ready to begin work earlier, Singapore was ready to do so as we had already appointed our representatives to the Joint Technical Working Group (or Rogatory Commission).

The Ambassador thanked Singapore for agreeing to the setting up of the Joint Technical Working Group (or Rogatory Commission) and said that the Romanian Prosecutor was ready to fly down to Singapore to meet with his counterparts "at anytime". MFA welcomed this assurance and told the Ambassador that we hoped that the Romanian authorities would propose specific dates for the visit without delay.

MFA also lodged a strong protest to the Ambassador on the inappropriate comments made by Dr Ionescu to the media on the integrity of Singapore's judicial system and the victims. Dr Ionescu's comments were without basis, callous in the extreme and showed an utter lack of remorse. MFA pointed out that the Singapore legal system was widely known for its transparency, integrity and high standards and that Dr Ionescu's callous comments on the victims had only further inflamed public feelings against Dr Ionescu and Romania.

MFA welcomed the Romanian MFA's disavowal of the allegations made by Dr Ionescu about the Coroner's Inquiry and Singapore's judicial system and its clarification that they did not represent the position of the Romanian Government.

MFA, however, stressed to the Ambassador that it was puzzling that the Romanian MFA continued to allow Dr Ionescu, who was still an employee of the Romanian Foreign Ministry, to make such inappropriate remarks.

MFA told the Ambassador that we understood that while Dr Ionescu had been suspended from his duties pending the outcome of the criminal investigation against him in Romania, he had not been dismissed, and so long as Dr Ionescu remained formally in the employment of the Romanian government, the Romanian MFA could not disavow responsibility for him and had a strong obligation to ensure that Dr Ionescu refrained from making outrageous and inappropriate statements. Such statements damaged Romania's reputation and were not in Dr Ionescu's own interests either.

MFA cautioned Ambassador Neagu that Romania should not underestimate the depth of feelings that had been aroused in Singapore over the case. Questions had been asked in Parliament. The Romanian Government must in its own interests ensure that justice was served and seen to be served. Otherwise, there would inevitably be consequences for bilateral relations.

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