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## **Singapore and Italian Furniture Industries Agree To Joint Efforts**

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By: Furniture World Magazine

The Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC) and the FederlegnoArredo (FLA), the Italian Federation of Wood, Cork, Furniture and Furnishing Industries, announced that they signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The MOU will promote better understanding, encourage knowledge-sharing and create further partnership opportunities between Singapore and Italian furniture players and designers.

The MOU was signed by SFIC President, Mr Andrew Ng and President of FLA, Mr Rosario Messina. Witnessed by Dr Massimiliano P. Sponzilli, Trade Commissioner, Italian Trade Commission in Singapore and Mr Chong Lit Cheong, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of International Enterprise (IE) Singapore, this is the first agreement of its kind between the local furniture council and a European counterpart. It builds upon the MOU signed by IE Singapore and the City of Milan in April this year to promote economic cooperation in areas such as design innovation.

Said Mr Ng: "In April, Singapore Mozaic, the local furniture industry brand, participated in the prestigious Salone Internazionale del Mobile held in Milan, Italy. This was led by SFIC and IE Singapore, and supported by SPRING Singapore and DesignSingapore Council. Our participation was mentioned by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in his National Day Rally speech as an example of how Singapore companies are aggressively spreading its wings

overseas. Italy is the world's centre for top quality furniture and stylish designs. Our local players will have much to learn from their Italian counterparts. With the signing of this MOU, we are very proud to actively expand upon the relationship we have built with FLA, the parent organisation of the Milan fair, over the course of our participation in the past two years."

Mr Messina said: "The rapid consolidation of the world furniture market is now demanding for FLA to take part in worldwide projects such as the organisation of international furniture fairs, design exhibitions and other seminars and conferences which could strengthen our competitiveness. Our international strategy is to promote Italian wood furniture through global events and in close cooperation with fellow furniture associations such as SFIC that will result in 'win-win' situations for everyone. We are impressed by Singapore's well-designed quality furniture and the reliability and effectiveness displayed by these companies when doing business. We are very happy to be working with SFIC, a highly-regarded furniture association in Asia and we are certain that this cooperation will bring mutual benefits."

Under the scope of the MOU, SFIC will work together with FLA to facilitate collaborations and 'match-make' suitable Singapore and Italian furniture companies that possess capabilities which complement each other's businesses. For example, Singapore manufacturers can team up with Italian retailers to bring its products into the competitive market in Italy. Similarly, Italian manufacturers can partner Singapore companies to value add to existing products and penetrate emerging markets in Asia such as China and Vietnam. Local companies can also take on distribution or franchising of Italian brands in Asia or the ASEAN region through their extensive contacts.

SFIC and FLA will also link up companies with furniture designers or architects to jointly undertake projects in Asia, Europe and internationally. They will also actively search for suitable marketing opportunities and look to provide support to companies from each country with contacts in the sourcing of raw materials, technology and production-related services.

SFIC and FLA will hold regular meetings to exchange experiences, discuss joint initiatives and provide updates on the latest market trends and data, legal issues on quality certification standards as well as industry trends in design, technical aspects and management. They will also promote trade exchange by leading delegations to reputed global trade fairs in each country, especially the Salone Internazionale del Mobile in Milan and the International Furniture Fair Singapore/ASEAN Furniture Show here in Singapore.

The Singapore furniture industry was recently singled out by Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong for its successful transformation from its roots as a labour-intensive trade to one that is now known for design excellence and high quality. Comprising 2,020 companies and creating jobs for 14,000 people in 2008, the Singapore furniture industry is today a global player with operations in more than 16 countries worldwide. According to latest compiled figures, Singapore's total furniture trade hit S\$4.2 billion, with exports amounting to S\$3.2 billion. The Italian woodworking and furniture making sector has a turnover of over €38 billion, and employs around 410,000 people. Exports represent more than 30 per cent of the total production.

Adds Mr Ng: "In the face of worldwide economic challenges, this MOU marks another step forward in the Singapore furniture industry's continuous effort to expand business opportunities globally. We are confident that our collaboration with FLA, one of the most influential Italian furniture associations, will help Singapore and Italian companies open up doors of opportunities in emerging areas of development and in new markets."

For more information on SFIC, please visit [www.singaporefurniture.com](http://www.singaporefurniture.com). For more information on Federlegno-Arredo, please visit [www.federlegno.it](http://www.federlegno.it)

**About Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC):** SFIC was established in 1981 as the official representative body of Singapore's furniture industry. It currently represents 95 per cent of established furniture manufacturers in Singapore, of whom 65 per cent have subsidiary manufacturing plants in the region including China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. Its primary role is to promote the interests of its members and the Singapore furniture industry.

Many of its initiatives aim to facilitate members' exposure to the world market, develop local talent and encourage entrepreneurship. SFIC organises the annual Furniture Design Award and PLATFORM to spur trendsetting furniture designs from Asia.

SFIC is the parent company of International Furniture Fair Singapore Pte Ltd, the organiser of the annual International Furniture Fair Singapore and ASEAN Furniture Show. SFIC also manages the International Furniture Centre, a year-round platform for international buyers to source and trade for a wide range of quality, well-designed furniture from Singapore and the region.

To ensure the industry's growth and viability, SFIC continues to forge close partnerships with the government and trade-related agencies to harness technology, knowledge and information for effective strategic planning.

**About FederlegnoArredo:** Founded in 1945, FederlegnoArredo (FLA) is the Italian Federation of Wood, Cork, Furniture and Furnishing Industries. It is part of Confindustria, the main confederation of the Italian industry, which supports technical and economic development, carries out professional training and technical education, and promotes the industry through exhibitions, professional trade fairs and consortiums. With over 2,300 member companies, FLA represents excellence in Italian woodworking and furniture making. The wood and furniture industry sector in Italy has built most of its success on the continuous growth of their presence abroad. Worldwide, Italian furniture is considered to be of the top-most quality.

Federlegno-Arredo promotes two international trade fairs in Milan:

1) Salone Internazionale del Mobile di Milano – “I Saloni” 14-19 April 2010. In 2009, almost 313,000 (more than 155,000 from abroad) visitors attended this world famous event.

[www.cosmit.it](http://www.cosmit.it)

2) MADE Expo – The International Event for Projects, Architecture and Building - Milano 3-6 February 2010. In 2009, more than 200,000 visitors attended the exhibition.

[www.madeexpo.it](http://www.madeexpo.it)