



Inauguration German Institute of Science and Technology (GIST), Singapore

04/02/2003

Speech of Professor Wolfgang A. Herrmann, President of the Technische Universität München (TUM)

Good Morning and welcome to all of you. What a great day to come: The Inauguration Ceremony of the “German Institute for Science and Technology” as a milestone in the Singaporean – German Science and Technology educational collaboration.

In particular as Guest of Honour, His Excellency Dr. Ng Eng Hen, the Minister of State for Education and Manpower,

His Excellency Mr. Michaelis, the German Ambassador to Singapore,

Prof. Shih Choon Fong, the President of the National University of Singapore,

Mr. Kenneth Tan, the Deputy Director of the Singapore Economic Development Board,

Dr. Franz, the Chairman of the Scientific & Technology Council to the Government of Bavaria,

Mrs. Nipperdey, the Chairman of the Technische University Executive Advisory Board,

Prof. Huber, the Vice-President of the German Academic Exchange Service,

Prof. Lai Choy Heng, the Dean of the Faculty of Science at the National University of Singapore,

Members of the Academic Community,

Sponsors of our scholarships and of GIST,

Members of the Singapore Business Community,

Members of the Diplomatic Community,

Excellencies,

Dear Students.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When I had the privilege to sign the contracts of interuniversity collaboration back in 1998, I was fascinated of the open academic spirit in Singapore. At that time, no less than 55 students of our university had already discovered the opportunities of taking academic courses in Singapore.

The novel German institute takes off from Bavaria. What do you associate with Bavaria? I am sure, you have heard of Franz Beckenbauer, the soccer champion; you may even drive yourself a BMW car (Bavarian Motor Works); you are, I am sure, aware of Bavarian beer, and TUM has the privilege to be associate with the oldest brewery of the world - started in the year of 1040; and Bavaria has the Technische University of Munich. And here we are!

Today marks a very special event in the 135 years' history of the Technische Universität München. In the last century, German universities enjoyed a high academic image due to excellent science and technology. In those years, scholars from many countries, especially from Asia, came to finish their studies in Germany. The positive impact of this early

academic export is still visible today. After two World Wars, accelerated technological development and high level scientific research emerged in the United States. Thus, many parents decided to send their children to high-ranking American universities. In my generation, in order to start an academic career you had to spend at least a year at a leading American academic institute. The generation of my children will be more open to include a look towards Asia for new opportunities in scientific research.

These days, German universities have to accept the reality of a global education market; especially since the largest student populations are developing in Asia. We can not expect that a great part of bright young students learn German first to study at our universities. To this end, we started to establish Master's courses in some of our science and engineering faculties, completely taught in English. As a result, we were able to offer a special LAOTSE-exchange program with the ten leading science and technology institutes of Asia, allowing them to send their best students to Munich. This program is financed by industry in Germany and in the Asian countries, which reflects the need of globally active companies to recruit academic graduates with experiences in Europe and in Asia.

Establishing the "German Institute of Science and Technology" in Singapore, we proceed one step further. We want to become an immediate competitor of the established branches of well-known international universities. Quite obviously, Singapore is an excellent choice, being an educational hub for South-East Asia. Leading universities from America, Europe, Australia and Asia have opened branches in Singapore, or plan to do so. The asset of German post-graduate university education is the strong link between research and teaching. In this we follow the strategy of our great educational reformer Wilhelm von Humboldt. To offer funding for interesting research topics to our young scientists, we need

close collaboration with industry. Therefore I am very grateful for the support of global companies present in Singapore in the development of our curricula.

In Singapore, Science and education are at the top of the political agenda. As a scientist, I am overwhelmed with what I got to see here, from top-quality mathematics to absolutely competitive biotechnology. I remember a striking remarks that Philip Yeo of A* Star / EDB made in one of our previous meetings: Science should be fun for children, but science must be passion for adults.

Being competitive as a university, TUM and GIST have to offer programs that comply with the needs of globally active companies. Our first master program “Industrial Chemistry” at GIST is a unique product on the global education market designed together with the chemistry faculties of TUM and the NUS as well as with the research and developments units of chemical industry. The coming master programmes this year in “Industrial and Financial Mathematics” and in the Food Science and Technology area will follow the same pattern. Industry not only helps us to design programmes according to their demands but supports GIST in sponsoring the tuition fees for the students and offering them internships. We expect after some years that the ranking of GIST programmes will provide us with more excellent students willing to pay the tuition fees by themselves.

For a start-up phase GIST is dependent on private and public financial support. We express our gratitude to the German Federal Ministry of Science and Technology and the DAAD, the German Academic Exchange Service. GIST is a prominent project in the DAAD

framework to export German study programmes. I hope we keep this position for some more years. I want to express my special thanks for public funding of GIST to the Singaporean Government and the Economic Development Board. We highly appreciate your policy to establish competitive university partners from all over the world here in Singapore. We are prepared to enter this competition by sending our top researchers into the GIST courses like we did with the Chemistry Nobel Laureate, Professor Huber four months ago, and like we do today with the Public Lecture of our Physics Nobel Laureate, Professor Mößbauer. Thank you, Professor Mößbauer, for spontaneously being ready the brightness of your scientific excellency onto the GIST Inauguration today.

Already during my own course given that I gave at GIST, I enjoyed the open-mindedness and the academic spirit of our students. They come from many different countries and already represent the type of young academics to shape the developing international identity of GIST. I am very grateful to you - clearly visible by your TUM-blue jackets today – that you discovered this new academic challenge in Singapore. It is for you, the students, that we design the “German Institute of Science and Technology” and I hope you will take home the best memories out of this program and the desired breakthrough for your professional career. Let me finish by emphasizing my own positive experience with the Singaporean strive for excellence in all projects of this dynamic society and let me wish to GIST to develop in this direction.