

**OPENING REMARKS BY DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND COORDINATING MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICIES, THARMAN SHANMUGARATNAM, AT THE 41<sup>ST</sup> SINGAPORE LECTURE BY PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY, HIS EXCELLENCY BİNALİ YILDIRIM, ON MONDAY, 21 AUGUST 2017, 4.30 PM, AT THE RITZ CARLTON HOTEL**

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His Excellency Binali Yıldırım

Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

1 A very good afternoon. We are greatly honoured to have Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım deliver the 41<sup>st</sup> Singapore Lecture today, the first by a Turkish leader.

2 This is Prime Minister Yıldırım’s first visit to East Asia since he became Prime Minister in May last year. His visit to Singapore comes amidst the steady growth in our bilateral ties, and adds momentum to our ties. We are delighted to have Your Excellency and your distinguished delegation here with us.

3 The title of Prime Minister Yıldırım’s lecture – “Turkey-Singapore Relations: Building a Smart, Strategic Partnership” – is especially timely in today’s interdependent world. It makes a lot of sense for both countries: we are each hubs in our respective regions and our economies are essentially complementary rather than directly competitive. There is hence much benefit in harnessing each other’s strengths to reap benefits for our businesses and people. In fact, Turkey is one of the select group of countries with which Singapore has signed a Strategic Partnership.

4 Singapore’s ties with Turkey in fact go way back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the Ottoman Empire established its first diplomatic mission in the Southeast Asia region here. We were both early entrepôts between the East and West, and international trade is in our blood. In this regard, the ratification of the Turkey-

Singapore Free Trade Agreement today, and its coming into force in October this year, will certainly add strength to our trade, investment, and people-to-people links. More importantly, it sends a timely signal of our two countries' commitment to the liberalisation of global trade.

5           Apart from trade and investment, Singapore and Turkey are cooperating in defence, counter-terrorism, aviation, education, and provision of technical assistance to other countries. But there is much more we can do together. We are confident that Prime Minister Yıldırım's visit will be a further boost to bilateral ties, especially as we look towards the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations in 2019.

6           Prime Minister Yıldırım is no stranger to Singapore. He had visited in 2008 as Minister of Transport, a position he held for nearly 13 years. A maritime engineer by training, Mr Yıldırım has played an instrumental role in the development of Turkey's infrastructure and sea lines. During his distinguished term in office, Mr Yıldırım has been responsible for several mega infrastructure projects, including the third Istanbul airport, the third Bosphorus Bridge, the Izmit Bay Bridge and the train line under the Bosphorus Straits linking Asia and Europe. He also spearheaded the expansion of Turkey's road and high-speed rail networks, and oversaw the construction of more airports in Turkey's remote regions. Between 2011 and 2016, Mr Yıldırım took on the maritime and communications portfolios as well, under which one of his most notable accomplishments was the inauguration of Canal Istanbul, a man-made waterway which is expected to ease congestion in the Bosphorus.

7           We look forward to hearing Your Excellency's views and vision of how Singapore and Turkey can elevate our partnership in today's uncertain world.

8           Without further ado, let me invite Prime Minister Yıldırım to deliver the 41<sup>st</sup> Singapore Lecture.