

The 38th Singapore Lecture
Strengthening Partnership for Regional Sustainable Development
by
His Excellency Tran Dai Quang
President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
Grand Ballroom
The Ritz-Carlton, Milenia Singapore
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Excellency, Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean,
Excellency, Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong,
Honorable Ministers,
Excellencies Ambassadors, Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps,
Professor Wang Gung Wu,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honor and privilege to deliver the 38th Singapore Lecture today.

I am also very pleased to meet and exchange views with all of you, leaders, politicians, members of cabinet, professors, scholars and academics at this most prestigious forum of the Lion City - *the land of miracles created by hard work, perseverance and strategic vision*. Your presence today demonstrates your profound interest in the relationship between Viet Nam and Singapore as well as the desire to share in and work together for a Southeast Asia of peace, stability, cooperation and development, and for a peaceful and prosperous Asia-Pacific region in a rapidly changing world with many opportunities and also no less challenges.

Allow me to express my most sincere thanks to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, the Government of Singapore and the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute for having accorded to the Vietnamese delegation and myself your kindest hospitality and warmest affections.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mankind has come into the latter half of the second decade of the 21st century and is witnessing many deep and comprehensive changes. The international community rejoices at the accomplishment of many Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Mankind's faith is reinforced as countries came to agreement concerning the common direction of development as outlined in the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda (SDGs). The future of the world looks brighter as nearly two hundred countries joined in a shared commitment to fulfill the Paris Agreement of Climate Change (COP 21). Peace, stability and cooperation for development has become an inevitable demand of all nations and a major trend in today's world. ***This is an opportunity and a very fundamental basis for us to work together towards a peaceful and stable environment, and join efforts to promote sustainable development, for the common interest and prosperity of mankind.***

In addition to opportunities and advantages, the world is faced also with many grave difficulties and challenges. Among these, armed conflicts, disputes over resources, territorial and maritime disputes, and international terrorism continue to rise with an ever more serious scale, frequency, nature and intensity. Non-traditional security challenges, especially cyber-warfare, the migration wave, water, energy and food security, pollution of the environment and climate change, among others, are far more destructive to human lives and property than any armed conflict, and no single country is capable of solving them at their roots. ***The seriousness of these challenges is extremely worrying as long as the "might makes right" mindset and the resort to the use of force still exist.***

At the same time, the vigorous development of science and technology against the backdrop of globalization and international integration has increased the interdependence among nations. The internationalization of production and the participation in the global value chain have changed methods of production, industrial relations and the everyday life of each person. This represents both an objective trend and a subjective demand, which is irreversible. ***What we can do is to work together to turn this trend into an opportunity for cooperation, sustainable development and prosperity.***

The Asia-Pacific, including Southeast Asia, continues to be a dynamic development hub with a growing geo-strategic, economic and political

importance in today's world. The South China Sea, located at the heart of Southeast Asia, not only brings about many important benefits to nations in the region but is also a vital route for maritime and air transport of the world. The entire region is exerting its best efforts to rise, through the promotion of initiatives on connectivity and political, economic, cultural and education cooperation, among others. Yet the recent worrying developments in the region and the South China Sea have had negative impacts on the security environment of the region, especially maritime security and safety, freedom of navigation and overflight, threatening to erode trust and affecting the cooperation process of the region. ***Should we allow instability to take place, especially in the case of armed conflicts, there will be neither winner nor loser, but rather all will lose.***

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Against this backdrop, the desire for peace, security and sustainable development in the region continues to burn more passionately than ever. Yet a desire will forever remain a desire unless we take actions. Opportunities may well turn into regret unless we take hold of them. Potentials shall become mere disappointments should we lack determination. The late Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Kwan Yew once said: “*you are not just making promises or pleasantries, you mean what you say*”. The only path to transform desire into reality is for all nations to stand united, act together and promote cooperation on the basis of international law, equality and mutual interest.

That is the goal of ASEAN. Over the past years, with a vision beyond its own interests, ASEAN has been expressing its voice, ever stronger and more responsible, over the common concerns of the international and regional community, especially in such areas of cooperation as sustainable development, climate change response and natural disaster and epidemic relief, among others. ASEAN has been very successful in drawing the strategic engagement of major powers in the common interest of peace, stability, sustainable development in the region and the world over. ***A multipolar, multi-layered regional architecture in which ASEAN plays a central role is conducive to and can satisfy the interests of all parties.***

In order to make better use of its role in maintaining peace and stability, promoting cooperation and fortifying itself in the face of hardships and challenges, ***ASEAN should strengthen the implementation of the four core***

areas known as CIROP: (i) Strengthen political Coherence, focusing on the promotion of dialogue and the building of confidence and common norms of conduct; (ii) Promote economic and cultural-social Integration, making use of economic advantages and harmonizing the cultural identity of each nation to create a combined strength of the Community; (iii) Uphold the Responsibility and the awareness of a shared destiny, attaching importance to the implementation of the core principles of ASEAN, in which solidarity and consensus are distinct values that member states should respect and preserve; and (iv) Steady the aim of an ASEAN Of the People, formulating mechanisms for citizens of ASEAN to take part in the making, supervision and implementation of policies, so that the service to the people would become the supreme goal in the building and development of the Community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the 20th century, the Vietnamese people have suffered great injuries and losses, our country has been ravaged and scarred by war. With the cooperation and assistance from the international community, with undaunted spirit and resilience, the Vietnamese people have risen from the yoke of oppression, ruin, poverty and backwardness. History has proven that solidarity, including international solidarity is a valuable tradition and major lesson of the Vietnamese people. Such a lesson has greatly influenced Viet Nam's foreign policy and actions.

After thirty years of reform, our country has overcome social and economic crisis and the state of underdevelopment. We have become a developing middle-income nation engaging in the process of strengthening industrialization, modernization and international integration. Yet we are also faced with many challenges and difficulties: a developing yet unstable economy, mounting public debt, gradually reducing bad debts that remain yet at a high level; unbalanced human resource structure, low workforce quality and infrastructure lacking in standardization; all of these continue to stand in the way of development. In that situation, ***we have been continuing to uphold the spirit of patriotism, make use of all resources and the creativity of the people while strengthening comprehensive reform so as to speed up national development in a sustainable way.***

In foreign relations, Viet Nam pursues a consistent policy of

independence, self-reliance, peace, cooperation and development; multilateralization and diversification of external relations, proactive international integration, being ready to be a friend, reliable partner and responsible member in the international community. Accordingly, Viet Nam pays close attention to the development of traditional friendly relations with neighbor countries, the promotion of cooperation relations with major and important partners, the improvement of integration effectiveness, and the fulfillment of all international commitments.

Regarding the South China Sea issue, it is our consistent position to remain resolute and persistent in the defense of national independence, sovereignty and territorial unity and integrity. We seek to settle disputes by peaceful means through the political, diplomatic and legal process on the basis of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mankind is entering the revolution of new technology and the era of the Internet of things, new materials, automation and, in the foreseeable future, artificial intelligence. This may be a challenge that requires a major effort, especially for developing countries like Viet Nam. Yet this is not a zero-sum game, but instead is an opportunity for sharing, cooperation and development. More than any others, Singapore, as a founding country of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, would understand the value of joining hands and joining minds to take hold of this opportunity.

I have visited Singapore on many occasions, but this is my first visit in the capacity as President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam to your beautiful and hospitable country on the eve of the third anniversary of the establishment of Viet Nam – Singapore Strategic Partnership (September 11th 2013 – September 11th 2016). Singapore has left me with great and deep impressions after every visit, of the development of your smart economy and high-quality workforce; of the vigor, creativity, diligence, the love of labor, discipline and the upholding of the rule of law exhibited by your people; and of the awareness in the protection of nature and unity in diversity that your nation has upheld.

The admirable development of Singapore over the last fifty-one years since the birth of your nation is a valuable lesson for Viet Nam in our national construction and defense. We hold in high regards and pay great attention to learning from Singapore's successes in the planning and implementation of the policy prioritizing investments in science and technology and education and training, in making use of training and the use of high-quality workforce to rapidly and sustainably develop your nation.

Yesterday, I had fruitful meetings with President Tony Tan and Prime Minister Lee HsienLoong. We are very glad to see that over the last forty years, ever since the establishment of diplomatic ties (October 1st 1973), the friendship and cooperation between Viet Nam and Singapore have been strengthened and deepened with many effective and practical cooperation mechanisms in many areas. Singapore is one of the top three countries and territories to invest in Viet Nam, and Viet Nam – Singapore Industrial Parks (VSIP) have become a symbol of this successful cooperation for mutual benefit. Tens of thousands of public servants and students who have received training in Singapore are making daily contributions to the development of our country as well as the friendship between Viet Nam and Singapore. Viet Nam always sees the success of Singapore and Singaporean businesses as an opportunity to promote cooperation for faster and more sustainable growth.

In regional and international issues, Viet Nam and Singapore share fundamental interests in the building of a strong ASEAN and a reliable partnership system as well as in the maintenance of a peaceful and stable international order that respects and adheres to international law. Viet Nam wishes to work together with Singapore to promote and further deepen the Strategic Partnership between our two countries across all areas, centered around economic, trade, investment, defense, security and maritime cooperation and cooperation at regional and international forums. The goal of our strategic partnership is nothing but a prosperous Singapore and a sustainably developing Viet Nam, contributing to the building of a prosperous ASEAN Community and an Asia-Pacific region of peace, security and development.

On this occasion, allow me to express my deepest gratitude to the Government and people of Singapore, especially the late Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew, a great friend of the Vietnamese people, for the practical and

effective assistance accorded to us in the past years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I hope that today's discussion will give us deeper insights on regional and international issues related to Viet Nam's foreign policy as well as Viet Nam – Singapore relations, so that we may devise more concrete cooperation activities and join hands for our common interests.

Once again, thank you all for being here today. May the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute continue to grow and attain greater achievements in academic research and high-quality human resource training, making practical contributions to the preservation of peace, security and sustainable development in the region and the world over.

I wish all of you good health, happiness and many successes.

Thank you very much..