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Forging a Strong Partnership to Enhance Prosperity of Asia - Speech at the National University of Singapore

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President of the People's Republic of China

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Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong,
Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean,
NUS President Mr. Tan Chorh Chuan,
Professor Wang Gungwu,
Faculty Members and Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning! I am delighted to come to the National University of Singapore and talk to you as a guest speaker of Singapore Lecture. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Singapore, and it gives me great pleasure to pay a state visit to the garden state of Singapore at the invitation of President Tan Keng Yam.

With a history of 110 years, the National University of Singapore is renowned both in Asia and internationally. Many Singaporean leaders such as Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, President Tan Keng Yam, Mr. S. R. Nathan and Mr. Goh Chok Tong, graduated from NUS. Indeed, NUS has produced a galaxy of talents and outstanding public leaders for Singapore. NUS champions the vision that there should be no walls around minds, no walls to ideas, no walls to talent and no walls between discovery. Such a no-walls culture embodies the creative, enterprising, open and inclusive spirit of Singapore, an important factor contributing to the success of NUS and Singapore.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the independence of Singapore. In the last 50 years, the hard-working and visionary people of Singapore have endured hardships and succeeded in building Singapore into one of the most advanced countries in Asia and a leading international economic, financial, shipping, and refining and petrochemicals center. Its achievements in national development are widely recognized. As the saying goes, when people only rely on heaven, their rice jars will be empty, but when people make efforts, their barn will be full of grain. This saying vividly reflects the spirit of Singapore, and we would like to express our sincere congratulations to the Singaporean people on their success.

Faculty Members and Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

China and Singapore are friendly neighbors across the sea with a long history of amicable exchanges. In the early 15th century, China's great navigator, Zheng He, called Singapore several times on his ocean voyages. A full size replica of the treasure boat of Zheng He is on display in the maritime museum of Singapore to honor this historic event. In the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, many people from China's Guangdong and Fujian provinces migrated to Southeast Asia, bringing with them Chinese culture and skills, and sowing the seeds of China-Singapore friendship.

In 1978, Mr. Deng Xiaoping visited Singapore, opening the friendly relations and cooperation between our two countries in the new era. At that time, China was embarking on a path of reform, opening up and socialist modernization and exploring the building of socialism with distinctive Chinese features. Here in your country, under the leadership of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore succeeded in pursuing a development path suited to its national conditions by combining the Eastern values with an international vision. After seeing first-hand Singapore's economic achievements, Mr. Deng Xiaoping said that China needs to learn from Singapore. China has drawn on the Singaporean practices in addressing tough challenges encountered in its reform and development endeavors. On its part, China's development has also created tremendous opportunities for Singapore's development.

Today, there are increasing political mutual trust and deepening practical cooperation between the two countries. The Suzhou Industrial Park and the Tianjin Eco City, two cooperation projects launched by the Chinese and Singaporean governments, have achieved full success. The third China-Singapore government-to-government cooperation project, with focus on connectivity and a service economy, will soon be launched in Chongqing, China. China is now Singapore's biggest trading partner, and Singapore is the biggest source of foreign investment and an important investment destination for China. The financial cooperation between the two countries is booming, with Singapore being one of the key Renminbi offshore trading centers. In addition, cooperation in science and technology, environmental protection, education, people-to-people exchanges, and social governance has delivered fruitful outcomes. The 25 years of growth in

China-Singapore relations has closely aligned the development strategies of the two countries as well as China's development goal and Singapore's unique strengths, thus creating a new way of cooperation that is in keeping with the times.

On this occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, China and Singapore have agreed to turn our relations into an all-round cooperative partnership progressing with the times. I am confident that with the concerted efforts of our two peoples, China-Singapore relationship will surely make new and even greater progress.

Faculty Members and Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

China and many Southeast Asian countries are connected by mountains and rivers, and China shares close cultural bonds with all countries in Southeast Asia. We have a recorded history of interaction of more than 2,000 years. The Chinese and Southeast Asian civilizations have grown together through mutual enrichment over the millennia. Since the ancient times, we Chinese have valued harmony in diversity and good-neighborliness, which have much in common with the values of the people of Southeast Asia. The Chinese culture cherishes such values as benevolence, virtue, modesty, self-reflection, learning, and pursuit of excellence. In many Chinese literary classics such as the Romance of the Three Kingdoms and All Men Are Brothers, the protagonists are both loyal and righteous, and these are the qualities that are admired by the Southeast Asian people as well. Similarly, the cuisine, music, architecture, painting and religions of Southeast Asia have also influenced the Chinese culture.

In modern times, China and Southeast Asian countries encouraged and supported each other in the cause of independence and liberation, and we have inspired and worked with each other in economic and social development. We assisted each other in overcoming the Asian financial crisis, the international financial crisis, the Indian Ocean tsunami and the devastating earthquake in Wenchuan, China. Today, China and Southeast Asian countries are making new progress in our respective development endeavors.

The Southeast Asian countries established the ASEAN in the 1960s in an effort to enhance development through unity. For nearly half a century, the Southeast Asian countries have addressed instability and underdevelopment and achieved stability and development, becoming an important force of peace, development and cooperation in regional and international arena. ASEAN has developed a distinctive ASEAN approach to both its own development and external affairs featuring mutual respect, consensus building and accommodating the comfort level of all parties. This has served the countries in the region well in their efforts to develop their relations, deepen cooperation and enhance integration. By the end of this year, the building of the ASEAN Community is expected to be completed, which will be the very first sub-regional community in Asia. China is committed to developing friendly relations and cooperation with ASEAN. We support ASEAN's development and growth, its community building endeavor as well as ASEAN centrality in East Asia regional cooperation.

Faculty Members and Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

China's neighborhood occupies a top priority on its diplomatic agenda, and China has the unshirkable responsibility to ensure peace, stability and development in its neighborhood. China is dedicated to promoting a more just and equitable global governance system, enhancing democracy in international relations as well as the building of a new type of international relations based on win-win cooperation and a community of shared future for mankind. Efforts to reach this goal should naturally start in its neighborhood.

China is committed to pursuing partnership with its neighbors and a neighborhood diplomacy of amity, sincerity, mutual-benefit and inclusiveness and fostering a harmonious, secure and prosperous neighborhood. China champions a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security in Asia. China endeavors to build a close community of shared future with ASEAN, and a community of shared future with all countries in Asia.

The belief in peaceful development is deeply rooted in the Chinese mind, and the vision of harmony and peaceful co-existence underpins China's neighborhood diplomacy. The Chinese people, having suffered so much from foreign aggression and internal turmoil in modern times, cherish peace. We will never waver in our determination to uphold peace, and we will never want to see others suffer what happened to us. China is now on the road to development and prosperity, but we reject the logic that a country which grows strong is bound to pursue hegemony. What we in China believe, starting with our forefathers, is that the strong and rich should not bully the weak and poor. And we see great truth in the saying that "a warlike country, however big it might be, is bound to perish." Some people are fanning up the so-called China threat. They may do so out of ignorance about China's past and present as well as its culture and policies, or they may do so out of misunderstanding of and bias against China. Some may even have some kind of hidden agenda in doing so. Let me be clear: China is committed to peaceful development and pursues an independent foreign policy of peace. This is not an expediency. It is a strategic decision made by China as well as a solemn pledge it has made to the world.

Having gone through poverty and turmoil for over a century, China knows full well the importance of development and stability. China has received support from its neighbors in its development endeavors, and China's development, in turn, has benefitted its neighbors. China hopes that its own development and that of its neighbors will complement each other, and China welcomes its neighbors to board the fast train of China's development so that they can share more from China's development.

Two years ago, during my visit to Central Asia and Southeast Asia, I put forward the initiative of building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The Belt and Road Initiative, as it is now called, is about openness, development and cooperation, and it calls for pursuing joint development and sharing benefits on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. The initiative has gained momentum. China has released the Vision and Actions of the "Belt and Road", a comprehensive document about the Initiative. Over 60 countries and international organizations have expressed interest to become part of the Initiative, and China has reached cooperation agreements with many of them. The Articles of Agreement of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has been signed, the Silk Road Fund has started implementing specific projects. And a number of major multilateral and bilateral projects are well underway. The main partners of the Belt and Road Initiative are China's neighbors, and they will be the first to benefit from it. China welcomes its neighbors to get involved in the Belt and Road Initiative. Together, we can surely translate the vision of peace, development and win-win cooperation into reality.

Faculty Members and Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The tide of history moves on and we must follow it. We have now reached a new historical starting point to grow China's relations with its neighbors. The fundamentals of Asia's economy are sound, and Asia remains an engine driving world economic growth. On the other hand, the Asian economy also faces significant downward pressure caused by both internal and external factors. Asia's political and social stability contributes to global stability. Yet, the region also faces a host of intricate security issues, particularly the rising non-traditional challenges such as terrorism, extremism, cross-border crimes, cyber security and major natural disasters. In response, most Asian countries have sought to settle differences through consultation and negotiation. But lack of mutual trust has given rise to disputes from time to time. The Asian countries are more interconnected than ever before thanks to the accelerated process of regional integration, but they may take different approaches to regional cooperation and security cooperation in the region is out of step with economic cooperation. All these are challenges that we should meet.

I have been thinking about how China's cooperation with the Southeastern Asian countries and its other neighbors can be deepened under the new circumstances to boost our common development. And the following is what I believe we should do together:

--We should work together to uphold peace and stability. Upholding peace in Asia is the shared historical responsibility of both China and its neighbors. We Asians should never allow animosity to divide us. We should increase mutual trust, work together to uphold peace and stability in Asia and foster a sound environment that enables us to achieve development and prosperity.

--We should form synergy between our respective development strategies. We Asian countries should give priority to development to make life better for our peoples. We should tap into our respective development strategies and engage in mutual assistance to create new drivers of cooperation. We should draw up new cooperation plans and lock in new outcomes such mutually beneficial cooperation delivers. As the pie of cooperation grows bigger, it will lend more momentum to growth in our respective countries.

--We should actively pursue security cooperation. As a Chinese saying goes, a single line of silk doesn't make a thread, and one hand cannot clap. We Asian countries should foster a vision of security suited to Asia and take a holistic approach to handling security issues in the region. We should jointly address both traditional and non-traditional security issues. We should stay committed to peaceful settlement of differences and disputes through friendly consultation, and we should give equal emphasis to both development and security. Together, we can achieve open, inclusive and win-win cooperation among neighbors that is based on mutual respect and mutual trust, and achieved by expanding common ground and narrowing differences.

--We should strengthen the close bonds among our peoples. Asia is home to time-honored civilizations which have nurtured the collective Asian values and an Asian identity. We should draw on this valuable asset and encourage people-to-people exchanges to strengthen the popular support for good neighborly relations. The traditional Asian value of peace and harmony should continue to guide our exchanges. By doing so, we can ensure long-term harmony and cooperation among the Asian countries.

I know that people have been closely following China's policy on the South China Sea. Let me make this clear: The South China Sea islands have been China's territory since ancient times. It is the bounden duty of the Chinese government to uphold China's territorial sovereignty and legitimate maritime rights and interests. The starting point and ultimate purpose of China's policy toward the South China Sea is to maintain peace and stability there.

Thanks to the joint efforts of China and other littoral states, the situation in the South China Sea is generally peaceful. There has never been any problem with the freedom of navigation and overflight; nor will there ever be any in the future, for China needs unimpeded commerce through these waters more than anyone else.

Although some of the islands over which China has sovereignty have been occupied by others, we have all along advocated a resolution of these issues through peaceful negotiation. China will continue to seek resolution of the disputes through negotiation and consultation with countries directly involved on the basis of respecting historical facts and in accordance with the international law. China has every capacity and confidence to work with ASEAN countries to maintain peace and stability in the South China Sea.

We welcome non-Asian countries to make a positive contribution to peace and development in Asia. At present, the most important task facing all Asian governments is to ensure robust and sustained development, which requires a peaceful and stable environment. This is the biggest common interest of Asian countries. Non-Asian countries should understand and respect this and play a constructive role.

Faculty Members and Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I understand you are quite interested in China's future development. The Communist Party of China has just concluded the fifth Plenum of its 18th Central Committee. This plenum adopted a proposal for the 13th Five-Year Plan for national economic and social development, which is a blueprint for China's development in the next five years. Our goal is to finish the building of a society of initial prosperity in all respects and double China's 2010 GDP and per capita income for urban and rural residents by 2020. This is the first of our two centenary goals.

To achieve this goal, we will pursue a four-pronged strategy of deepening reform, advancing law-based governance and improving Party conduct in an all-round way with the goal of finishing building a society of initial prosperity in all respects. We will pursue development as a top priority, with emphasis on its quality and efficiency. We will accelerate efforts to put in place systems, institutions and development models that boost economic development under new conditions. We will maintain strategic resolve, pursue progress while ensuring stability, and promote coordinated development of China's economy, political system, the cultural sector, society, the environment and the Party.

To achieve this goal, we will follow the principles of innovative, coordinated, green, open and inclusive development.

To pursue innovative development is to place innovation at the core of our national development endeavor and enable it to underpin all endeavors of the country and become a trend in the country.

Coordinated development requires us to promote balanced development between urban and rural areas and between economic and social development, and ensure balanced progress in promoting a new type of industrialization, IT application, urbanization and agricultural modernization. It also means strengthening China's soft power as well as hard power and overall national development.

To achieve green development, we will follow the basic state policy of resource conservation and environmental protection, pursue sustainable development, and promote modernization in a new way that enhances harmony between human development and the preservation of nature. By doing so, we will contribute more to global ecological security.

Open development demonstrates China's commitment to pursue the win-win strategy of opening-up, develop a high standard open economy, take an active part in global economic governance and the provision of public goods, and build a community of extensive common interests.

Inclusive development means development for the people, by the people and its fruits shared by the people. It means we must work hard to make all of our people benefit more from such development and eventually achieve common prosperity.

To achieve this goal, China will increase cooperation with all other countries, especially its neighbors, and China's development will bring greater opportunities for the world, particularly its neighbors. We are ready to share these development opportunities with other countries in Asia and work with them to create a better future for Asia.

Faculty Members and Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

How time flies! As we look back on the history of China-Singapore relations, we cherish all the more the memory of two great statesmen who forged this relationship, Mr. Deng Xiaoping and Mr. Lee Kuan Yew. Five years ago on another visit to Singapore, I joined Mr. Lee Kuan Yew in unveiling a commemorative marker in honor of Mr. Deng Xiaoping on the bank of the Singapore River. Even though both of them are no longer with us, their great achievements will always be remembered by us.

The youth represent hope and the future. I am glad to see that the saplings of friendship and cooperation between China and Singapore so carefully nurtured by past generations of leaders of the two countries have grown into luxuriant trees laden with fruits. The baton of China-Singapore friendship needs to be passed on to you, the younger generation of the two countries, and it is you who will carry forward this friendship. Last July, several Singaporean college students in their early 20s joined a "Looking China" program to learn about China through taking photographs, a program that took them to Northwest China. There, they captured images of modern China through camera lens and experienced and shared the Chinese culture with others by watching the local Qinqiang Opera, eating Lanzhou hand-pulled noodle and taking a river trip on sheepskin rafts. Two Chinese students studying at the National University of Singapore spent an entire year filming the personal stories and dreams of 50 Singaporeans. I am sure you know many similar anecdotes of such people-to-people exchanges.

As a Chinese saying goes, instead of complaining that one's talents go unrecognized, one should learn to appreciate the wisdom of others. I hope the young people in both China and Singapore will learn more about the history and culture of both countries as well as each other's personal aspirations. Learn from each other, deepen your friendship, carry forward China-Singapore friendship, and be a new force driving the growth of China-Singapore relations. This is my hope for you.

Faculty Members and Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Looking ahead, I believe that Asia is once again taking the lead in promoting the development of history. Asia is our homeland, and is where our future lies. China stands ready to work with Singapore and other neighbors as well as all the other countries in the world to usher in a new era of all-round cooperation and turn Asia into our beautiful homeland.

Thank you!

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