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**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT HALIMAH YACOB
AT THE STATE BANQUET HOSTED IN HONOUR OF
EMIR OF THE STATE OF QATAR
SHEIKH TAMIM BIN HAMAD AL THANI,
17 OCTOBER 2017**

Your Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani

Excellences

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

1 I am pleased to welcome Your Highness and the distinguished delegation from the State of Qatar to Singapore. We are deeply honoured that Your Highness is making a State Visit to Singapore as part of your visit to Southeast Asia. I understand that the preparations for this regional visit started since early in the year.

2 Your Highness is familiar with Singapore. Singapore had the pleasure of hosting Your Highness on several occasions stretching back more than a decade. However, this particular visit is especially significant because it is Your Highness' first State Visit to Singapore. I am therefore

happy that the very first State Visit I am hosting since assuming office is for an old friend of Singapore.

3 Singapore and Qatar share many similarities. The trajectories of growth and development of our two countries show that success does not depend on size. Both our countries serve as dynamic hubs within our respective regions. Our two countries have worked hard to be relevant globally. Both Singapore and Qatar are also active, responsible and constructive members of the international community.

4 Given our shared outlook and common interests, relationship between Singapore and Qatar has grown from strength to strength since diplomatic ties were established in 1984. Anchoring this close bilateral relationship is the Qatar-Singapore High-Level Joint Committee (or HLJC in short). As the Qatari co-chair for the first five meetings of the HLJC, Your Highness played a pivotal role in advancing the

comprehensive partnership that our two countries now enjoy. Qatar is the only Middle East country with which Singapore has maintained such a high-level bilateral mechanism. The HLJC process has spawned 28 agreements across a wide range of areas, including business, legal, public administration, education, security, and urban planning. The formalisation of a further 7 agreements earlier this afternoon exemplifies the breadth and depth of our partnership.

5 Singapore and Qatar are both business-friendly economies and strong advocates of free trade. Notably, the milestone Gulf Cooperation Council-Singapore Free Trade Agreement was signed in Doha in 2008. I am confident that the just concluded Bilateral Investment Treaty will create more opportunities for trade and investment, and the recently established Singapore Business Council based on Doha will help deepen business links between our two countries.

6 Our two countries also enjoy good people-to-people ties. A small but vibrant community of nearly 500 Singaporeans live in Doha. Many Qataris visit Singapore for tourism and healthcare. Qatar Airways offers many destinations to Singaporean travelling overseas. Football-loving Singaporeans are also familiar with Qatar because of football teams such as Paris St Germain which is owned by Oryx Qatar Sports Investment. On that note, we are eagerly looking forward to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. As the first World Cup to be held in the Middle East, it will be a momentous occasion. We are confident that it will be a resounding success.

7 The bilateral relationship between Singapore and Qatar is in excellent shape, and there is potential to further strengthen our partnership for mutual benefit. Your Highness's visit to Singapore will help to inject the necessary momentum to bring this relationship between our two countries to the next level.

8 Ladies and Gentlemen, in closing, I would like to wish His Highness good health and every success. Let me also wish the people of Qatar continued peace, progress and prosperity. I look forward to an enduring and warm friendship between Singapore and Qatar.

9 Thank you. National Archives of Singapore

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