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**SPEECH BY MR LEE YOCK SUAN, MINISTER FOR INFORMATION
AND THE ARTS, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE SINGAPORE
INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION (SIF) INTO THE NEW MILLENNIUM
ON 7 NOVEMBER 2000 AT 7.00 PM, AT THE ARTrium, MITA BUILDING**

Chairman Singapore International Foundation, Mr Lee Seng Wee,
Ladies and gentlemen

National Archives of Singapore

I am happy to be here today at this launch of the Singapore International Foundation (SIF) into the new millennium.

Globalisation

2 Singapore's globalisation efforts have been progressing well. We have strong economic links with key global players as well as the region. Singapore is a regional hub and most of the Fortune top 500 companies are represented here. Some Singapore companies have earned an international reputation and forged substantial business alliances with major international corporations. Singapore companies have ventured abroad not only within the region but to distant locations

like Latin America and Eastern Europe.

3 Besides our business links, our international profile has also risen. Through judicious participation in international affairs and development, Singapore has become a respected voice on the world stage. Recently we were elected to a non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council for two years from next January. We actively promote and contribute to the work of many international organisations and multi-national groupings such as ASEAN, APEC and ASEM.

4 Singapore is also well plugged into the global information superhighway. Today, nearly 60% of households own personal computers and some 42% have access to the Internet. No country can work in isolation from the rest of the world. Not only is information mobile, people are also more mobile than ever before.

Staying connected

5 Business, educational and cultural opportunities abroad are plentiful and Singaporeans are taking advantage of them. Helping Singaporeans to adjust to overseas living while remaining Singaporean at heart is a major challenge.

Role of the SIF

6 This is where the Singapore International Foundation plays an important role. It is the very reason for its formation in 1991. SIF's role is to help Singapore to integrate with the world -- socially, culturally and economically.

7 As an organisation with many contacts both within and outside of Singapore, SIF should continue to tap on the goodwill of Singaporeans here and overseas. It can do so by improving its successful programmes which have helped many Singaporeans adapt to overseas living and stay committed to Singapore.

8 I am glad that SIF has been pro-active in reviewing its directions, programmes and image at the dawn of the new millennium. It is alive to the implications of current changes sweeping the world -- the technology and globalisation that are transforming businesses, economic structures and human society. Through its actions, SIF is willing and able to exploit the opportunities that come with these changes.

New directions

9 One of the initiatives to emerge from SIF's review is the decision to enhance its reach and effectiveness by partnering civil society and other organisations in implementing some of its programmes. The Youth Expedition Project launched in February is an example of such collaboration. In this programme, Singapore-based corporations with regional links such as Jurong Town Corporation, SembCorp Parks, DelMonte and Hewlett Packard help develop and support overseas community service expeditions undertaken by our youths. Another programme -- OutTrEACH -- is a joint SIF-MOE effort. OutTrEACH allows teachers on Singapore Volunteers Overseas (SVO) assignments to go on full-pay leave for the first half of their one-year stint. SIF and the People's Association also jointly projected Singapore at Expo 2000 in Hanover, Germany. These partnerships enable SIF to leverage on the synergy that comes with collaboration.

10 SIF has also been collaborating with Singaporeans who are studying and working abroad. Overseas Singaporeans are a valuable resource which we can tap on to extend our international network and foster friendship for Singapore.

11 Overseas Singapore clubs are already helping SIF to organise conferences, while overseas Singaporeans are invited to take part in SIF activities such as Singapore Volunteers Overseas and the Youth Expedition Project. Their willingness to participate in SIF projects augurs well for Singapore. It indicates their continued commitment to Singapore even though they are physically away from home. Through its close ties with more than 75 overseas Singapore Clubs and business associations worldwide, SIF has helped keep the Singapore spirit alive and make overseas Singaporeans feel that they are a part of our community.

Sustaining the Singapore Heartbeat

12 In the New Economy, we can expect more Singaporeans to venture overseas for experience or to realise their dreams of making a fortune. Some will be posted abroad to work for MNCs or local companies that have gone international. Others may venture abroad to test themselves in a bigger, more competitive market. Singaporeans with experience working, living or studying overseas are useful intermediaries in the global economy. Being familiar with foreign business climate and society, they can help Singapore enterprises expand into the international arena. As long as they remain Singaporean at heart and seek to contribute even from afar, they remain our assets. They may also turn out to be good ambassadors for Singapore.

13 If Singaporeans cut their ties with Singapore and cease to contribute directly

or indirectly, it will be a loss to Singapore. It is therefore important for us to help them maintain ties with home so that they may eventually return or at least continue to lend their expertise to our national effort.

14 With its new focus and direction, SIF will help to bring the Singapore Heartbeat to Singaporeans all over the world. I wish SIF every success in achieving its vision and mission in the new millennium.

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