

**SPEECH BY MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND SECOND MINISTER
FOR DEFENCE MR LUI TUCK YEW AT THE RECEPTION TO
CELEBRATE THE BIRTHDAY OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN
MARGRETHE II ON 20 APRIL 2015**

Your Excellency Henrik Sass Larsen Danish Minister for Business and Growth

Your Excellency Berit Basse Ambassador of Denmark to Singapore

Ladies and Gentlemen

1 On behalf of the Government and the people of Singapore, I extend our congratulations and best wishes to the Government and the people of Denmark on the occasion of the 75th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II.

2 I would also like to extend a very warm welcome to Minister Sass Larsen to Singapore, and thank him for his words of condolence on the passing of Mr Lee Kuan Yew. Mr Lee's passing is a great loss to us. But he has left a great legacy for Singapore and Singaporeans.

3 This year, Singapore celebrates our 50th year of independence. This year also marks 50 years of diplomatic relations between Singapore and Denmark. Although diplomatic relations were established in 1965, ties between our countries and peoples go back far longer. The first Danish consulate in Singapore was set up in 1845 to

prepare for the arrival of the Danish vessel, *Galathea*, during its expedition around the globe. In fact, even earlier, Danish surgeon and naturalist, Nathaniel Wallich, a good friend of Sir Stamford Raffles, visited Singapore in 1822. With Wallich's help, Raffles set up Singapore's first botanical garden on the slopes of Fort Canning Hill to experiment with crops like nutmeg and clove. The garden's successor, the Singapore Botanic Gardens, is today a major centre for plant research and horticulture in Southeast Asia.

4 Since those early days, our two countries have established strong ties, founded on common philosophies including as open maritime economies and staunch advocates of free trade. We have regular exchanges at the political level. Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong met Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt on the sidelines of the Asia-Europe Meeting Summit in Vientiane in 2012. During my visit to Copenhagen last October for the Danish Maritime Forum, I had fruitful discussions with Minister Larsen and Danish Minister for Transport Magnus Heunicke.

5 In his speech, Minister Sass Larsen mentioned several new areas of cooperation between Singapore and Denmark, which have grown over the years. Another key area is Arctic affairs. Singapore applied for and was admitted as an observer state in the Arctic Council in May 2013. We thank Denmark for your support for our observership. I look forward to our two countries working together to promote better awareness of the fragility of the Arctic and the global impact of changes in the Arctic, and towards the sustainable development of this delicate region.

6 Trade and investment flows between our countries are also healthy. Denmark was our 15th largest trading partner in the EU in 2014, with bilateral trade totaling close to a billion Singapore dollars. Denmark was our 6th largest investor from the EU and 19th largest globally last year. There are close to 300 Danish companies in Singapore, which have contributed not just to Singapore's economy but also to research and innovation. For example, under a grant from the Singapore Environment and Water Industry Programme Office, Danish pump manufacturer, Grundfos, is developing a new wastewater filtration technology that could significantly reduce the costs of wastewater treatment.

7 As maritime nations, Denmark is one of Singapore's key maritime partners, and maintains a strong presence in Singapore. Singapore is proud to host world-leading Danish shipping groups such as A.P. Møller-Maersk, Norden, Clipper, J. Lauritzen, and Torm, which have set up office here to tap opportunities in Asia. More than 200 vessels registered with the Singapore Registry of Ships last year belong to Danish ship-owners.

8 We are also grateful for the strong support by Danish companies in the field of maritime training. Under the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore's Global Internship Award programme, Singaporean undergraduates take up internships with international maritime companies, including an overseas stint. I thank Danish companies like Norden, Maersk and J Lauritzen which have participated in the programme. I am happy to learn that the first student who interned at Norden in 2013 was subsequently hired as a shipping trainee under the Norden Shipping Trainee Programme.

9 Our bilateral relations go beyond cooperation in international affairs and business. Our government agencies have visited your country to learn from you, on wide-ranging topics such as sustainable development, smart cities, early education and innovation. Among our educational institutes, the Singapore Management University and the Copenhagen Business School have ongoing exchange programmes to promote cross-cultural learning.

10 I am also happy to see that Danes living here have made Singapore a home away from home. Sitting picturesquely atop Mount Faber, and established in 1895, the Danish Seamen's Church was set up to meet the spiritual needs of the Danish community – particularly seafarers – living in or visiting Singapore. Today, it offers the community here an attractive venue not only for religious events, but also social and cultural activities. For many Singaporeans, Danish ideas and products have become a part of their daily life. Our children grow up reading the beautifully-written tales of Hans Christian Andersen and playing with Lego bricks. When they are older, many develop an acquaintance with Carlsberg!

11 I am confident that in the years ahead, both our people-to-people and bilateral ties will grow from strength to strength. On this note, once again, our best wishes on the occasion on the birthday of Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II. Thank you.