

**SPEECH BY MDM HALIMAH YACOB,  
SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT  
AT THE 13<sup>TH</sup> PARLIAMENT OF SINGAPORE (1<sup>ST</sup> SESSION)  
ON FRIDAY, 15 JAN 2016**

Honourable Members, please allow me to thank Ms Grace Fu, Leader of the House and Mr Cedric Foo for proposing and seconding my nomination. I also wish to thank Mr Zainal Sapari, Ms Tin Pei Ling and Mr Vikram Nair for supporting my election as Speaker of this 13<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

I am most humbled by your trust and confidence in me, and for re-electing me as the Speaker of the House. This is a duty that I do not take lightly as I understand the tremendous responsibilities and expectations that follow this appointment. It is a great privilege and honour to serve in this House and I will discharge my duties fairly and impartially. I entered this House as a backbencher in 2001, and had presided as the Speaker over the last three years. Over the 12<sup>th</sup> session of Parliament, I had the honour to preside over a number of major debates. This includes the most unforgettable Special Sitting to commemorate our longest serving and truly outstanding member of this House our late Founding Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew. Mr Lee's absence will be felt in this House. And I am sure that succeeding

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generations of Members, will continue to be inspired by his work and vast contributions to this House.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the new Members to this House. I know that you are raring to go and I look forward to your maiden speeches. You come from different backgrounds and will bring new ideas and fresh perspectives to the debates in this House, contributing to more robust policy making. Being new, you will take some time to be completely immersed in your new role as Parliamentarians. Do seek the help of our Parliament Secretariat, if you need to, and I am sure that your more experienced colleagues will also be more than happy to show you the ropes.

I urge you to familiarise yourselves with the Standing Orders of the House. I am bound by the Standing Orders which are designed to ensure that we can maintain order, but, at the same time, allow Members to participate freely. You are also covered by Parliamentary Privileges, which give you a fair amount of wriggle room to make your speeches. However, at all times, remember that with those privileges are attached great responsibilities, which require us to use them wisely.

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I urge you to keep your speeches succinct, as the length of a speech is no indication of its impact. Make speeches that are honest, sincere and heartfelt. There is no need to play to the gallery. It is much easier to be convincing if you care about your topic, so you should figure out what's important to your message and speak from your heart. Mr Lee Kuan Yew once said in this Parliament, "You must have convictions. If you don't have convictions, you are going in for personal glory or honour or publicity or popularity, forget it".

Honourable Members, the forces that we have to contend with as we enter the New Year are numerous and daunting. Greater global economic uncertainties, regional insecurities and unprecedented challenges to our safety and security, will require not just quiet introspection on our part but cohesiveness and single mindedness in purpose and action. Only the collective resolve and strong determination of all Singaporeans will overcome them. As Parliamentarians, we must

lead the way. Regardless of the party that we represent, or the interests that we wish to champion, we are first and foremost the representatives of the people, and must act in their best interest. We certainly have our work pretty much cut out for us.

Let me wish all Honourable Members all the very best in the discharge of your duties.