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**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT HALIMAH YACOB AT THE OFFICIAL DINNER HOSTED
IN HONOUR OF THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES PRINCE CHARLES OF WALES AND
THE DUCHESS OF CORNWALL CAMILLA AT THE ISTANA BANQUET HALL ON
31 OCTOBER 2017 AT 7.30PM**

Your Royal Highness The Prince of Wales

Your Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

1 Good evening. I am pleased to welcome Your Royal Highnesses to Singapore. This is His Royal Highness' second visit to Singapore. His Royal Highness first visited Singapore in 1979, when Singapore was still very much a fledgling nation. I believe that His Royal Highness would find a much-changed Singapore today from the one he remembers.

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2 Singapore shares a rich and enduring relationship with the United Kingdom. Over the years, we had the honour of hosting many members of the Royal family. Notably, Her Majesty The Queen made three State Visits which many Singaporeans still recall fondly. In the past year, we have also welcomed Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal in November 2016 for the Commonwealth Agriculture Conference, His Royal Highness The Duke of York in June 2017 for

the Commonwealth Science Conference, and His Royal Highness Prince Henry of Wales in the same month.

3 In 2014, my predecessor Dr Tony Tan was graciously hosted by Her Majesty The Queen for the first-ever State Visit to the United Kingdom by a President of Singapore. We hope to reciprocate the warm hospitality with our guests here today.

4 The shared history between Singapore and the UK dates back to 1819, when Sir Stamford Raffles founded a trading port in Singapore. This set the stage for the development of modern Singapore, and planted a global outlook into Singapore's DNA. Today, trade is three times the size of Singapore's GDP. Our two countries enjoy excellent economic ties and strong collaboration in research and development. The UK is Singapore's fifth largest European trading partner and sixth largest investor globally. More than 4,000 British companies have established a presence in Singapore, including major global industry leaders such as Rolls-Royce, GlaxoSmithKline and Dyson, which have all contributed strongly to Singapore's innovation landscape.

5 The hallmark of Sir Stamford Raffles can also be seen in our language, form of governance and legal systems, as well as in smaller details such as architecture, road names and schools. For example, the vision underlying the Singapore Botanic Gardens, Singapore's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, originated from Sir Stamford himself, a keen naturalist. Singapore Botanic Gardens and UK's Royal Botanic Garden Kew continue to collaborate today, in student

and staff exchange programmes as well as plant specimen exchanges. Likewise, Tiong Bahru estate, which Your Royal Highnesses will visit tomorrow, contains elements of British architecture in the 1930s.

Your Royal Highnesses,

6 Singapore and the UK continue to share a strong Commonwealth heritage. In fact, Singapore had the honour of hosting the inaugural Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 1971. The Commonwealth remains an important platform for our two countries to exchange best practices and strengthen collaboration with each other. We are happy to see the re-launch of the Royal Commonwealth Society of Singapore in 2016, which established the Singapore Commonwealth Fellowships in Innovation. Singapore's youth are also enthusiastic participants in programmes such as The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition, with Singapore having one of the largest number of entries.

7 Strong people-to-people ties continue to underpin the many facets of the excellent bilateral relations between Singapore and the UK. Our two countries enjoy a natural affinity due to our common history, and the UK today hosts one of the largest communities of overseas Singaporeans. Besides calling the UK their second home, many Singaporeans contribute actively to British society. Likewise, the 40,000-strong British community in Singapore is the largest in Southeast Asia. They have become an integral part of the Singapore story with their many contributions.

8 These connections offer us a glimpse of a relationship that spans two centuries, during which bilateral ties have matured in many aspects. I am confident that Singapore-UK ties will continue to flourish as we look to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the founding of modern Singapore in 2019. On this note, I would like to once again extend my warmest welcome to Your Royal Highnesses to Singapore.

Your Royal Highness The Prince of Wales

Your Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I invite you to rise and join me in a toast to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II (*the second*), on the occasion of this historic visit by Your Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall.

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