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**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT ONG TENG CHEONG
AT THE DINNER HOSTED IN HONOUR
OF HIS MAJESTY KING MSWATI III
OF THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND
AT THE MANDARIN HOTEL
ON TUESDAY, 27 MAY 1997 AT 7.30 PM**

I am pleased to welcome Your Majesty King Mswati III and Your Royal Highness and your delegation to Singapore. Your visit to Singapore is the first by a Swazi Head of State. It reflects our mutual desire to enhance the friendship between our two countries.

Singapore and Swaziland enjoy good and friendly relations that go back many years. Diplomatic relations between our two countries were established on 1 September 1992 and a Singapore Ambassador was accredited to Swaziland in September 1995. There have been regular contacts between our two countries at various levels. My Prime Minister, Mr Goh Chok Tong met Your Majesty at the Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Jakarta in September 1992 and again at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Cyprus in 1993. Then Prime Minister of Swaziland, Prince Jameson Mbilini visited Singapore in November 1995.

Your Majesty,

The growth in our bilateral relations comes as no surprise. Though geography separates us, we have much in common. We are both small

countries with small populations. We share a similar colonial tradition. We are young nations that achieved independence at about the same time¹. We are both members of the United Nations, the Commonwealth and the Non-Aligned Movement. These international fora offer our leaders and officials the opportunity to meet regularly and exchange views on areas of cooperation and issues of common concern.

Your Majesty's visit is a milestone in the development of our bilateral relations.

Singapore's growth is founded on the experience of others. In this learning process, we have also made mistakes. We have learnt that there is no single path to success but there are certain common tenets among high-growth countries. We are happy to be able to share some of our experiences with our friends.

To this end, Singapore has embarked on a modest technical training cooperation programme. It is based on our own underlying belief in and emphasis on human resource training; human resource being the single most important factor in our development.

1996 marked the first year that Swaziland participated in our Singapore Cooperation Programme. Swazi participants have also attended training courses under the Singapore-UNDP programme and the Singapore-Commonwealth Third Country Training Programme. To date, some 10 Swazi nationals have received training in Singapore. I wish to assure Your Majesty that we remain committed to expanding our cooperation with Swaziland in areas where Singapore is able to.

After decades of political struggle, the Southern African region now enjoys peace and stability. The nations of the region can now channel their

¹ Singapore August 1965 and Swaziland September 1968

energies into trade and investment. Thus, the potential for growth in trade between our two countries is good. However, the trading and investment opportunities in Swaziland are not well known in Singapore. More could be done through a better exchange of information on business and investment prospects. Tourism is another area where there are opportunities for cooperation among our businessmen. I am therefore pleased to welcome the business delegation that has accompanied you. I am sure that the meetings which your businessmen will have with their counterparts in Singapore will give both sides a better understanding of the trade and economic potential available. Singapore would continue to welcome more trade missions from Swaziland to inform our businessmen about these opportunities.

It is my hope that your visit to Singapore will generate strong interest in Swaziland in our part of the world. Likewise, I hope that your visit has also sparked interest in Singapore's potential as Swaziland's gateway to this region.

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I now ask you to rise as I propose a toast to His Majesty, King Mswati III.

To your good health,

And to peace and prosperity for the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland.
