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**WELCOME REMARKS BY MR GOH CHEE WEE,
MINISTER OF STATE (TRADE & INDUSTRY) AND (COMMUNICATIONS),
AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE SINGAPORE-BRITISH BUSINESS COUNCIL
AT WESTIN STAMFORD HOTEL
ON FRIDAY, 28 OCTOBER 1994 AT 11.00 AM**

Let me begin by extending a warm welcome to our friends from the United Kingdom (UK) to this morning's launch of the Singapore-British Business Council.

Singapore is pleased to host the Inaugural Meeting of the Council. As you are aware, the Council was the product of discussion between Prime Minister John Major, and Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong during PM Goh's visit to the United Kingdom in April 94. Since then, officials and businessmen from both countries have made significant progress in their discussions, culminating in today's launching. The rapid pace at which the Council was formed reflects the strong interests of both countries to further economic cooperation.

Like our British friends, the Singapore Government and our private sector recognise the increasing interdependence of the world economy. It is with this in mind, that Singapore embarks on a programme to invest in regional countries. While the aim is to build a second wing for our economy, the guiding principle which we hold to closely is that our investments must always be beneficial not only to Singapore, but also to the host countries.

Opportunities abound for more than Singapore alone. Singapore, for example, has been actively encouraging companies in the West to plug into the growing Asian region and to

participate in its economic development. There is vast potential for mutually beneficial partnerships between Singapore and British companies.

The United Kingdom has traditionally been one of Singapore's closest economic partners. In the past, the link has been primarily through trade and the UK's investment in Singapore. Singapore has been an attractive place for British companies to locate their high-value added manufacturing and service activities. Some major British companies with a strong presence in Singapore are Glaxo, British Petroleum (BP) and ICI, to name a few.

We welcome Britain's continued investment in Singapore. We believe Singapore is a good base for British companies to site their business operations and to venture into the region. Collaboration for investments in regional projects by companies from our two countries, however, represents a new dimension in our economic relationship. Singapore warmly welcomes joint ventures with interested British companies to invest in China, India, Indonesia, Myanmar and other countries in the region. Projects could either be located in our industrial parks like the Suzhou Township and the Bangalore IT Park, or in new destinations considered commercially viable by the private sector.

The potential benefits for our two countries are enormous. Today, newly industrialised Asian economies are the fastest growing markets for British exporters. Exports from Britain to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, South Korea, Thailand and Singapore rose by 25 per cent in the three months to July this year, compared with the same period a year ago. Similarly, Britain's trade with the emerging economies of India, China and Indo-China is also growing.

As co-operation broadens between Singapore and the United Kingdom, the private sector from both sides will have a greater need to meet regularly to monitor progress and coordinate their

initiatives. The Singapore-British Business Council will serve as the primary channel for consultation to take place. The Council will also play a key role in facilitating the tie-ups between Singapore and British companies by serving as the contact point for Singapore and British businessmen to meet and exchange business ideas. The Council will work closely with the governments of both countries. While the British and Singapore governments will facilitate ventures overseas by providing a conducive business environment for the private sector, it is the private sector that will bring such ventures to fruition.

I expect the role of the Singapore-British Business Council to evolve and expand in future. I am confident that what we have begun will develop into a durable framework for furthering the interests of both the United Kingdom and Singapore, and will help ensure strong relations between our two countries for many years to come.

I wish the Council a successful inaugural meeting this afternoon.

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