STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW

IN PERTH, 29 OCTOBER 1976

My discussions with Mr. Malcolm Fraser on international and regional matters have given me a better insight into his thinking and policies. He is a realist. Our frank exchange on present trends was valuable because it gave me a three-dimensional perspective of the Australian government's view of the contemporary world.

On major issues we were in broad agreement. With continuing American interest in the stability of the West Pacific area, a new security balance can be established by the contending, and sometimes complementary, interests of America, China and the Soviet Union.

National Archives of Singapore

It will now require greater cooperation amongst the countries of the region. In particular, non-communist Southeast Asia must be more self-reliant and united in meeting their common problems. An era of dominant Western influence in Asia is over. And American intervention in guerilla wars is unthinkable.

However, cooperation in investments and trade between Japan, the countries of ASEAN, Australia and New Zealand will make Congressional support more likely for whoever is elected as American president and wants to maintain a continuing American naval and economic presence in these regions.

I believe relations between Australia and the countries of ASEAN have improved. It is becoming a more mature relationship, one between adults. The donor-donee relationship does not engender that mutual respect which is essential for long-term cooperation.

There are difficulties in making any move at present on easing imports into Australia from the countries of ASEAN. But, in about 12-18 months, when the Australian economy recovers, I hope there will be a gradual and graduated lowering of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade between the ASEAN counties and Australia. This is the best way to guarantee better relations between Australia and her immediate neighbours to the north.

National Archives of Singapore

The connections between Australia and Singapore, dating back to the days of empire, have made for a hard-headed understanding of each other. Realistic and sympathetic understanding has been maintained, despite the vast changes in our respective circumstances.

My government welcomes the promise of continuing cooperation with Australia in improving Singapore's defence capability. The significant emphasis is that any training is to help Singaporeans to look after themselves.

National Archives of Singapore