ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. LEE KUAN YEW, AT THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE ASEAN HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING IN KUALA LUMPUR ON FRIDAY, 5 AUGUST 1977

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is now my pleasant duty to thank the Prime Minister of Malaysia for being such a warm and impeccable host. My delegation and I have been the beneficiaries of thoughtful and extensive preparations and to all those involved I extend our thanks and gratitude. They have ensured that our meetings were efficiently serviced, whilst every facility was and still is at our disposal for an enjoyable stay.

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The Kuala Lumpur meeting will perhaps be remembered for the realistic assessment of ASEAN's progress and potential. The free and informal discussions among Heads of Government have made us realise why certain objectives of ASEAN cannot be achieved as quickly as some of us would have wished them to be. There are difficulties which, for a variety of reasons, cannot be overcome as simply as we would wish. As a result, we have to accept a pace

of intra-ASEAN economic cooperation which is more congenial to all of us, even though it may be less than what is achievable if we all set our sights higher.

However, the progress which ASEAN has made in the last 18 months is not insignificant. The agreement on the five ASEAN industrial projects is upheld. And the 71 items for the preferential trading arrangement will be added to as and when the Economic Ministers feel they can make further advances, even before their annual meetings. So whatever the pace, we are agreed upon the direction we should go.

In the next few days, we shall find our work less vexatious. In our external relations, we share common views. So we have no major adjustments to make in our basic assumptions when discussing economic relations with Japan, Australia and New Zealand. Similar experiences have left us with similar attitudes. It is psychologically easier to deal with ASEAN's external partners, than to sort out the intra-regional arrangements between the partners themselves. But this is only in the initial phases. In the intermediate stage, we shall discover that to quicken the pace of economic cooperation with industrial countries, we must increase the pace at which we move in adjusting our intra-ASEAN relationships, in order to facilitate and absorb a larger transfer of capital,

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technology, know-how and skills. But in the spirit of ASEAN consensus, we have agreed that we shall tackle these problems when we come to them.

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