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Dear Editor:

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3 Nov 99

Dear Editors

Visit to France by RAdm (NS) Teo Chee Hean

Please find attached the press release on Minister Teo Chee Hean's visit to France from 3 to 5 Nov. We are also advancing you a copy of the speech which he will be delivering at the French Institutes of International Relations (IFRI)'s 30th Anniversary Conference on 4 Nov. Please note that the speech is embargoed until delivery. We will be informing you after the delivery of the speech whether there are any amendments. Please do not carry the speech till you receive further notice from us.

Thank you!

Yours faithfully,

MRS LILIAN CHEONG

PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIVISION

for PERMANENT SECRETARY (EDUCATION)

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PRESS RELEASE

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, #36-00 PSA Building, 460
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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION PRESS RELEASE

VISIT TO FRANCE BY RADM (NS) TEO CHEE HEAN,
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, FROM 3 - 5 NOV 99

1. Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defence, RAdm (NS) Teo Chee Hean will be visiting Paris, France from 3-5 Nov 99. Minister will be accompanied by senior MOE officials.
2. During his visit, Minister Teo will deliver an address entitled, "Interdependence and the Conduct of International Relations", at the French Institute of International Relations' 20th Anniversary Conference.
3. Minister Teo will be meeting his counterpart, the French Minister of Education Claude Allégre, to discuss issues in education. Minister Teo will also be visiting educational institutions in Paris, including tertiary and research institutions.

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

3 NOVEMBER 1999

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SPEECH BY SINGAPORE'S MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

AND SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE,

REAR-ADMIRAL (NS) TEO CHEE HEAN,

AT THE IFRI 20TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE,

IN PARIS ON 4 NOVEMBER 1999, 10 A.M.

INTERDEPENDENCE AND
THE CONDUCT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Mr Chairman

Ladies and Gentlemen

First, let me convey my warmest congratulations to IFRI on its 20th anniversary. IFRI is today one of the most prestigious think-tanks in the world. Its research and discussions have significant impact on the thinking of policymakers everywhere. I hope that as IFRI steps into the new millennium, it will continue to

be an important voice in the international discourse on the shape of the world.

The Impact of Globalisation

Ladies and Gentlemen

2 This Conference has picked a theme that is currently occupying the minds of leaders and policymakers – Globalisation at Work. It is a most useful theme, for globalisation will continue to be the dominant trend in the 21st Century. Globalisation has changed the way we work and live. What is less clear is its impact on global stability and the conduct of international relations. Today, I would like to focus on this issue.

3 The growth in international trade and investment has increased interdependence among countries. It has been suggested by some that such mutual dependence will significantly reduce the potential for conflict and war – the argument being that as transnational issues multiply, countries will increasingly need to cooperate with one another.

4 This would be the ideal scenario. Unfortunately, we are far from this ideal. There is evidence all around us that greater interdependence has not brought utopia and the end of wars and international tensions. In fact, it could be argued to the contrary that global integration has increased the potential for disagreement and conflict. In the past, less intercourse meant that there was less likelihood of antagonisms. Globalisation has multiplied the number and range of issues that require international dialogue and cooperation. But countries do not come to the table with identical approaches. In fact, the more countries are involved, the more likely is there to be disagreement and dispute. Each state has its own particular history, culture, and economic and geographical imperatives. It is difficult enough to reach consensus within a state. It is likely to be more difficult to reach a consensus internationally.

5 Globalisation is often disorienting. Insecurities are magnified and there is a desire to cling to old certainties. Globalisation has provoked nostalgic and defensive nationalism in America, Europe and many developing countries. It has brought new forms of protectionism and challenges to the global open trading system. In some countries, globalisation has led to deep soul-searching about national culture and national identity. People are driven to identify themselves with their communities at the most parochial level so as to give their lives a semblance of order and continuity. We see the consequences in ethnic fragmentation and a new tribalism.

6 Globalisation has loosened the control of governments over national destiny. In economics and in finance, the markets rather than governments rule. Giant transnational companies and investment funds dwarf many a developing country. Their decisions on where to locate manufacturing and place their funds impact upon the economics and politics of even the developed countries.

7 Asian countries devastated by the economic crisis of the past two years were not the first to learn this painful lesson. European countries that tried, and failed, to hold the value of their currencies against the tide of the market had learnt this lesson a decade earlier. The Asian financial crisis was not purely about finance, but also about global economic integration. It was, in a sense, one act in the unfolding drama of how states are struggling to come to terms with globalisation. Among the crisis countries, some chose to remain open and restore confidence and stability by subjecting themselves to the orthodoxy of the IMF. Others opted to isolate themselves, at least temporarily, in an attempt to regain control of their destiny. Although governments are still free to decide how they will act, states can no longer function as self-contained economic units. Globalisation has profoundly altered every government's capacity to govern.

Redefining Sovereignty

Ladies and Gentlemen

8 There is now a raging debate about national sovereignty and international intervention. This is not surprising. In a world where distance has disappeared the sufferings of people on the other side of the globe, from East Timor to Kosovo, are immediately telecast into our living rooms. A gross violation of human rights cannot but evoke a reaction and response. In Kosovo, the absolute right of a sovereign government was subject to compliance with civilised standards of conduct and respect for human rights. In such situations, the world has claimed the right to defend a people even against its own legitimate government. But, as Kosovo and East Timor showed, national sovereignty is an issue of great sensitivity and explosiveness. It can touch the very core of individual consciousness.

9 This debate has arisen, in part, because the expectation that the post Cold War world would be multipolar has not yet come to pass. There is discomfort that globalisation is, in fact, Americanisation. The label of the US as the "indispensable or solitary power" and the "global policeman" have not helped to forge the kind of international consensus needed to deal with problems in a new way. On the contrary, they have engendered unease among countries such as China, Russia and India, and these countries are exploring new configurations among themselves for some counterbalance. Smaller countries, while welcoming the protective mantle of international intervention should they come under threat, worry that their views will not carry weight in defining any international consensus, and their sovereignty may be trampled on one day.

10 What can be done? We clearly cannot reverse globalisation. A reversal is undesirable anyway as globalisation is on balance beneficial.

11 Certainly, the issue is not so stark as to force us to choose between national sovereignty and the complete surrender of national sovereignty in an interconnected world. Sovereignty is indeed the key principle of the current state system. It is also clear that in practice sovereignty has never been absolute, as even the most powerful states have sometimes had to make compromises. We also voluntarily subordinate and surrender some portions of our sovereignty when we work together on transnational issues.

12 Dealing with globalisation poses a different challenge than just insisting on the legal concept of sovereignty or persuading governments to work together on specific issues. It forces a reconceptualisation of the idea of government and statehood.

13 Nation states will not go away. If anything, more states are being formed as larger states break up when they fail to resolve the issues of ethnicity and the new tribalism. There are as yet no viable alternatives for organising the way that separate political entities interact with one another. Nevertheless we need to recognise the inadequacies of the current system.

Coping with the New World

Ladies and Gentlemen

14 More needs to be done in capacity building, and equipping nations with tools to cope with globalisation. What are needed are stronger political, economic, financial, social, educational and cultural institutions that can withstand and, indeed, ride on globalisation. The experience of Asian countries in the financial crisis illustrates this. The countries which had weaknesses in financial supervision, exchange rate regimes and corporate governance suffered most. The primary lesson of the crisis for Asia is that each country must have sound macroeconomic and financial policies, and economic structures that can withstand market scrutiny. This is necessary when globalised financial markets react instantaneously to perceived weaknesses with devastating effects.

15 National institutions also need to cultivate the qualities of nimbleness and responsiveness. The world is changing at an ever-accelerating pace. Technology, communications, financial markets, etc, are changing in ways that cannot be predicted. The only certainty is that change is inevitable and we must develop the nimbleness to adapt and stay ahead of the curve. Countries that wish to draw the full benefits of globalisation need to be fully plugged into the global network. They need to build the institutions and expertise to cope with the roller-coaster ride of globalisation.

16 At the international level, the global community has to come to terms with the profound changes to the concept of national sovereignty. Since the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, the notion of national sovereignty has been universally accepted. Westphalian rules assume that states have absolute sovereignty within their own territory, and that they are free from constraints by supranational bodies. These Westphalian principles are embodied in the Charter of the United Nations. The UN, which is based on the principle of sovereign equality, also stresses the principle of non-interference in internal affairs.

17 States guard these prerogatives jealously and choose to cooperate with other states when their national interests coincide. But in a globalised and interconnected world, interests are co-mingled in complex and indirect ways, and action in the collective interest requires cooperation even when national interests, as conceived in the narrow sense, are not directly involved. The concepts of "nation" and "interests" need to be redefined, together with new forms of international cooperation where there is shared responsibility for governance and a pooling of sovereignties.

18 We will require an international consensus on what is needed to advance the general interest of nations if we are to pool sovereignties and deal with global problems in a new and effective way. Such an international consensus does not yet exist. States are struggling to come to terms with making economic policy in the full glare of the globalised economic and financial markets, and they are searching for new strategic meaning to define themselves after the Cold War. The strangely comforting certitudes which guided international action over the last half of the 20th Century are now gone, and questions of international peace and stability are being decided on an ad hoc basis. Why act in East Timor or Kosovo? The reasons are certainly compelling enough. But then why not also in other trouble spots in Africa or in Central Asia?

19 In his recent report to the United Nations, the Secretary-General said, and I quote: "Nothing in the UN Charter precludes a recognition that there are rights beyond borders. What the Charter does say is that 'armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest'." He called for a relook at the concept of humanitarian intervention and its impact on the traditional notions of sovereignty, and asked: What is the common interest? Who shall define it? Who will defend it? Under whose authority? And with what means of intervention? These are questions which need to be debated and answered by the international community.

20 These are not merely academic questions. Without a consensus on these issues, interventions would be castigated as selective and their motivations questioned. Cynicism might well set in and undermine support for the very concept of intervention.

The Contribution of the EU

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Ladies and Gentlemen

21 The EU has a unique role to play. It is the only group of countries that has come close to the pooling of sovereignties needed to deal with new global problems. The countries of the EU have a long history of resolving conflict and building peace and cooperation. Twice in this century they have fought devastating wars and searched for formulas to bring lasting peace. The EU of today reflects this history.

22 The role played by the United States in international affairs today is overwhelmingly pre-eminent. This role is, by and large, uniquely benign and constructive. But this unipolarity has caused unease and discomfort and elicited

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negative reactions. The EU, with its strong and positive relations with the US and compatible views on a wide range of issues, can temper the sharp edges of unilateralism in US policies.

23 The countries of the EU can also contribute a different perspective from that of the US. While the US is a huge island continent secure in itself, with a world-view shaped by its unique history and geography, the long experience of EU countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America give them a deep understanding of these countries, and provide a useful historical perspective and long term view.

24 The EU offers valuable experience which other regions of the world can adapt. This will help build a wider consensus for global action. As EU members move towards closer coordination in foreign affairs and defence, the EU will have a more important and effective voice in international issues. A larger EU role on the world stage will contribute to a more stable world.

Thank you.

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