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SPEECH BY PROFESSOR TOMMY KOH, SINGAPORE'S AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE, AT THE FOURTH PLENARY MEETING FOR US-SINGAPORE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS, HELD ON 21 DECEMBER 2000, 2.30 PM (EASTERN TIME) IN WASHINGTON DC, USA

STATEMENT OF THE SINGAPORE DELEGATION

Mr Ralph Ives, Ladies and Gentlemen

We have come to the end of the first round of the USSFTA talks. Before my colleagues and I leave Washington DC to return to Singapore I would like to make a brief assessment of what we have accomplished in the past three weeks.

First, we have increased the web of relationships which exist between the officials of our two countries. The good relations between our two countries must be anchored in good ties between our political leaders, officials, business leaders, and leaders of civil society. During the past three weeks, old friendships have been reinforced and new friendships have been formed. One of the benefits of negotiating a FTA between the US and Singapore is to strengthen the bonds which bind our two countries together.

Second, we have created goodwill and mutual trust and confidence. During all our meetings, formal as well as informal, we have succeeded in creating a positive and collegial atmosphere. We have avoided confrontation and acrimony. Where we must disagree we have agreed to disagree in an agreeable manner. As a result, I can truly say that the negotiating process has generated much goodwill and that our negotiators have established mutual trust and confidence. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our American colleagues for having worked very hard and for sacrificing their week-ends and holidays.

Third, and our most tangible achievement, is that we have produced over 100 pages of text. We have agreed on a table of contents. We have compiled and consolidated those texts under the different chapter headings. We have texts containing draft proposals covering most of the important areas of our negotiations, such as, trade in goods, trade in services, electronic commerce, intellectual property, dispute settlement etc. To be sure, much remains to be done. There are outstanding issues in some of the chapters which await resolution. We have no texts in some other chapters. We have begun a journey but we still have many miles ahead of us. The consolidated texts however constitute an important milestone on our journey. It is a good basis for us to resume our negotiations.

Tonight, our Jewish colleagues celebrate the Jewish holiday of Hanukah. In a few days, our Christian colleagues will celebrate Christmas and our Moslem colleagues will celebrate the end of Ramadan. I wish them, "Shalom", "Merry Christmas" and "Selamat Hari Raya". In a few more days all of us will be celebrating the New Year. I wish all of you a very good New Year.

The Singapore delegation looks forward to working with our American

colleagues again early in 2001. I am authorised by my government to offer to host the second round of our negotiations from the 8th to the 12th of January 2001 in warm and sunny Singapore. In the interest of equity and reciprocity and in order to enable you to see the realities of Singapore for yourself, I hope you will find it possible to accept our invitation.

Thank you very much.

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