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SPEECH BY DR WONG KWEI CHEONG, MINISTER OF STATE (LABOUR) &  
CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY BOARD, AT THE ANNUAL DINNER  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE ON 29 NOV 81  
AT THE SHANGRI-LA HOTEL AT 2000 HRS

The President of the United Nations Association of Singapore (UNAS),  
Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

1. The World Situation

The fast changing world situation brings with it new problems which have to be resolved quickly. The more critical problems are those relating to disarmament and the establishment of a more equitable international economic order.

All nations are confronted with similar problems and the effective resolution of these problems calls for united efforts on their part. These problems were extensively discussed at United Nations forums. There seem to be a general awareness of the threats caused by dissensions, conflicts and even the lack of consensus.

It is understandable that each nation will view world issues and problems subjectively and its approach to seeking solutions will naturally be geared towards its own survival first. This in itself is a factor to be reckoned with if we were to develop a common approach to solving world problems.

2. International Co-operation

There are of course fundamental problems of structure to be considered in international co-operation in order that it might be meaningful. In the area of economic development, the developing nations certainly view the present international economic order as inequitable. However, there seems to be no easy solution to the problem. Prevalent is the tendency for the 'superpowers' to form self-sufficient groups, resisting outside interventions. The recent suggestion by Reagan that developing nations put their own house in order as a first priority in solving international economic issues, reflects a fundamental switch in the philosophy underlying the granting of aid for development.

Asean nations, I believe, understand the full meaning and import of the Reagan statement. Indeed, the formation of Asean as an economic grouping and its common approach to international issues reflect its belief that such issues, whether political or economic, are best solved on a regional basis. This is because the constituent nations or a regional grouping share a common identity. And as a group they have the collective resources to make a meaningful contribution to international well-being.

3. Economic Development

Current developments in the international economy seems to suggest that the unemployment problem will become more acute. Here again, the problem is likely to be greater in the developing economies. Current estimates indicate that at least 1000 million new jobs have to be created in the

next decade. Under such circumstances, continued efforts need to be made to remove the barriers that restrict the free flow of goods and services.

Economic growth also entails the upgrading of technological competence in the developing economies. It has been estimated that 90% of the technology used in industry is found in the developed economies. There is a direct relationship between the possession of technology and the generation of economic development.

#### 4. Singapore

In Singapore we have increased the technological contents of our industrial enterprises. Some of the technological know-how will have to be imported at great cost. The introduction of higher level technology in our industries would be meaningless without the support of a technically competent and motivated labour force. We need a balanced mix between the two to get the best results. The technology that we have begun to introduce is capital intensive and labour-saving. This is important, as Singapore has limited human resources.

Singapore, together with its Asean partners will continue to strive for regional cooperation at all levels. We can make our contribution to the promotion of peace and prosperity in the world as a group of like-minded nations.

I am particularly pleased to note that the United Nations Association of Singapore is doing its part to help Singaporeans think about the various economic and political issues that face the world to-day. We have to bear in mind that political and economic issues are often inter-linked. The Singapore economy is an integral part of the international economy. To respond quickly and judiciously to political and economic developments in the world, we will need to cultivate an active interest of what goes on in the various countries. In this regard, I hope you will continue to support the work of the United Nations Association of Singapore.