

**15 April 2024**

## **Joint Statement by the Prime Ministers of Singapore and New Zealand**

1. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong hosted Prime Minister Rt Hon Christopher Luxon on an Official Visit to Singapore from 14 to 16 April 2024. Prime Minister Lee welcomed Prime Minister Luxon on his first official engagement in Singapore. Both Prime Ministers acknowledged the deep historical connections and wide-ranging cooperation between Singapore and New Zealand across a range of fields, and shared regional and global interests and outlooks addressing common challenges.
2. Prime Minister Luxon acknowledged the significant contributions made by Prime Minister Lee to deepening ties between the two countries, and the deep and enduring legacy Prime Minister Lee will leave for Southeast Asia and the wider region.

### **The Singapore-New Zealand Enhanced Partnership**

3. The Prime Ministers highlighted significant developments made in the Enhanced Partnership between Singapore and New Zealand that continues to underpin the strategic relationship between the two countries in the five years since its launch in 2019. The Enhanced Partnership currently covers five pillars: a) Trade and Economics; b) Security and Defence; c) Science, Technology and Innovation; d) People-to-People Links; and e) Climate Change and Green Economy.
4. The Prime Ministers committed to strengthening cooperation in the next phase of the relationship under the Enhanced Partnership. They agreed that both sides should look to expand practical cooperation in priority areas of food security, supply chains, the green economy, digital, critical and emerging technology, and engagement on Pacific issues and efforts to advocate for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The Prime Ministers agreed to elevate the relationship by the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of Singapore-New Zealand diplomatic relations in 2025.

### **Economic Resilience and Supply Chains**

5. The Prime Ministers noted the challenging geopolitical environment and growing protectionism impacting both countries' shared core interests in building resilient supply chains and protecting food security. They reaffirmed the joint commitment by Singapore and New Zealand as trusted friends to work together during times of crisis, recalling the close cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic to keep supply chains open. The Prime Ministers welcomed progress under the Supply Chain Working Group launched in 2022.
6. To reflect the importance of economic resilience for future prosperity and security, the Prime Ministers agreed to add a sixth pillar on "Supply Chains and Connectivity" to the

Enhanced Partnership. Under the pillar, the Prime Ministers announced a package of new initiatives to further strengthen supply chain connectivity and food security, expand commercial partnerships in food and agriculture, promote investment opportunities, and strengthen cooperation on cross-border trade facilitation matters. A list of agreed initiatives is in the Annex. Under the new pillar, the Prime Ministers agreed to launch negotiations for an Agreement on Trade in Essential Supplies. The Agreement builds on the close cooperation on the *Singapore-New Zealand Declaration on Trade in Essential Goods for Combating the COVID-19 Pandemic* and aims at a higher level of ambition for a stronger bilateral supply chain relationship. The Agreement will become part of the Singapore-New Zealand Closer Economic Partnership.

### **Climate Change and Green Economy**

7. The Prime Ministers recognise the need to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and support the global economic transition that is under way as part of their shared commitment to implement the Paris Agreement and seize growth opportunities in the green economy. New Zealand and Singapore will work together to ensure their economies are prosperous, clean, and future-proofed.
8. The Prime Ministers noted the good progress made implementing the "Climate Change and Green Economy" pillar launched in 2022. Singapore's role as a regional green finance and carbon services hub complements New Zealand's role as an investment destination for clean energy production and a test bed for sustainable technologies.
9. The global low emissions transition presents opportunities to drive economic growth and innovation. The Prime Ministers agreed that Singapore and New Zealand would further enhance cooperation under the Climate Change and Green Economy pillar. The Prime Ministers directed officials to explore how New Zealand and Singapore will cooperate to promote commercial partnerships in achievement of their respective climate change and economic transition goals. This could include Green Economy focused business missions to Singapore and New Zealand to identify opportunities for collaboration in areas such as energy and transport technology, and cooperation on finance and investment including carbon markets.
10. The Prime Ministers agreed that Singapore and New Zealand would further enhance cooperation in sustainable aviation and shipping, as well as collaborate to advance green customs issues. They acknowledged the opportunity for Singapore and New Zealand to be pathfinders in developing international frameworks to drive net zero transition and economic growth.
11. New Zealand and Singapore are both committed to ambitious implementation of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) Clean Economy Agreement. Officials intend to explore collaboration to identify concrete ways IPEF can deliver for the small economies participating, such as through the IPEF Cooperative Work Programmes.

## **Defence and Security**

12. Building on a deep history of cooperation dating back to the Second World War, the Prime Ministers agreed that New Zealand and Singapore will continue to strengthen defence and security cooperation including through high-level dialogues, training, military exercises, professional exchanges, and cooperation at multilateral fora. The Prime Ministers welcomed the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of New Zealand Force South East Asia (NZFORSEA) reflecting New Zealand's longstanding engagement supporting peace and security in the region. The Prime Ministers affirmed their commitment to the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) and to the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus.
13. The Prime Ministers noted with satisfaction that Singapore's unilateral live firing artillery exercise hosted in New Zealand, Exercise *Thunder Warrior*, will recommence in 2025. The Prime Ministers were pleased that New Zealand is renewing its mandate for the Counter Terrorism Information Facility.
14. On security cooperation, the Prime Ministers noted the strong ongoing cooperation in cyber security, border security, and law enforcement.

## **Science, Innovation and Technology**

15. The Prime Ministers were pleased with the progress made on science, research, and innovation collaboration, including ongoing joint research projects between Singapore and New Zealand universities and research institutes in the areas of data science and future foods. Both countries will explore collaboration opportunities such as a second phase of the Singapore-New Zealand joint research programme in future foods and in areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). The Prime Ministers also noted opportunities for potential cooperation on innovative technologies in frontier areas, which agencies would explore in the next phase of the Enhanced Partnership.

## **Regional Economic and Trade Cooperation**

16. The Prime Ministers welcomed the development of stronger economic linkages between Singapore and New Zealand and reaffirmed their shared commitment to upholding the rules-based trading system and promoting resilient supply chains. Both countries welcomed the signing of the Second Protocol to Amend the Agreement establishing the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) and will continue to work together on the ongoing implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement. New Zealand and Singapore support the expansion of existing agreements such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA) to include economies that are willing and able to fully adhere to the agreements' high standards.

17. Singapore and New Zealand remain committed to the CPTPP vision of connecting Asia, the Americas and the Pacific via trade and investment and the CPTPP's important role as the vehicle for driving economic integration in the region and beyond. New Zealand and Singapore will work together on the ongoing expansion and upgrading of the agreement through the accession and General Review processes, so that it remains fit-for-purpose and the benefits to CPTPP Members can continue to grow.
18. The Prime Ministers also noted the importance of enhancing collaboration with partners across the Indo-Pacific region in implementing the new 14-country agreements on Supply Chains, Clean Economy, and Fair Economy under the IPEF. Both countries look forward to working closely together with IPEF partners.
19. Prime Minister Lee welcomed New Zealand's commitment to step up and deepen engagement in the Southeast Asian region, with both Prime Ministers recognising ongoing opportunities for New Zealand and Singaporean companies to work together to support growth of exports and services to Southeast Asia, South Asia, and beyond.

### **Global Developments**

20. The Prime Ministers also exchanged views on regional and global developments.
21. The Prime Ministers once again condemned in the strongest terms Russia's illegal and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine over two years since it began. They noted their ongoing commitment to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Prime Ministers acknowledged the global impact of Russia's aggression, including on food and energy security in the Indo-Pacific region. They reiterated their support for a comprehensive, just, and durable peace in Ukraine in accordance with the UN Charter. The Prime Ministers called on all those with influence on Russia to exert this now to convince Russia to abide by its international obligations, withdraw troops from within Ukraine's internationally recognised borders, and then enter diplomatic negotiations as a pathway to resolution of the conflict.
22. The Prime Ministers reiterated their shared commitment to a prosperous, open, inclusive, rules-based and resilient Indo-Pacific region, which supports and promotes free trade and open markets, and respects the rights of countries to lead their national existence free from external interference, subversion and coercion. They reaffirmed the fundamental importance of ASEAN Centrality and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) to the region, and agreed to continue to work closely with ASEAN in ASEAN-led mechanisms such as the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum, including on cooperative projects under the four priority areas of the AOIP. The Prime Ministers acknowledged the unique value of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), where Singapore and New Zealand collaborate closely on a range of trade and economic issues that are contributing to a more integrated and prosperous region, including on issues such as the green economy, digitalisation and trade facilitation. They also reaffirmed their shared determination to strengthen the WTO and the rules-based multilateral trading system.

23. In the maritime domain, the Prime Ministers expressed concern over developments in the South China Sea and reaffirmed the right of freedom of navigation and overflight and other lawful uses of the seas accorded by international law particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). They reaffirmed the need for all states to pursue peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law, including dispute settlement mechanisms. The Prime Ministers reiterated that UNCLOS sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. They further affirmed the need to respect states' ability to conserve, sustainably develop, and effectively manage their maritime natural resources in accordance with international law, in particular UNCLOS. They reaffirmed that all concerned parties must abide by the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, and reiterated their support for ASEAN-led efforts to develop an effective and substantive Code of Conduct for the South China Sea that upholds the legitimate rights and interests of all parties and is consistent with UNCLOS. They also affirmed the importance of acting consistently with the relevant Standards and Recommended Practices of the International Civil Aviation Organization, and the relevant instruments and conventions of the International Maritime Organization.
24. The Prime Ministers condemned ongoing Houthi attacks in the Red Sea as illegal and called on the Houthi to cease immediately their attacks on international shipping in the region.
25. The Prime Ministers expressed their grave concern at the dire situation in Gaza and the tragic loss of Israeli and Palestinian lives following the brutal 7 October terrorist attacks by Hamas. They reaffirmed the urgent need for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, the safe, unconditional, and immediate release of all hostages and a rapid, massive and sustained increase in the delivery of lifesaving humanitarian assistance into Gaza. The Prime Ministers welcomed critical efforts by regional partners to achieve this as soon as possible and called on Israel to urgently facilitate safe and unimpeded humanitarian access. They reiterated that the protection of civilians in accordance with international law is of paramount importance, and expressed their deep concern at Israel's potential ground offensive into Rafah which would have catastrophic consequences for the civilian population sheltering there. The Prime Ministers restated their steadfast commitment to a negotiated two-state solution, consistent with relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, which establishes a Palestinian state alongside Israel in peace and security. They called on the parties to urgently return to the negotiating table in an effort towards this – the best path for durable and lasting peace in the region. The Prime Ministers also shared the international community's grave concerns about broader regional escalation in the Middle East, particularly Iran's recent strikes on Israel, and urged maximum restraint on all sides.
26. The Prime Ministers acknowledged the third anniversary of the 1 February military coup in Myanmar and their deep concern for the deteriorating situation. They called on the Myanmar military authorities to immediately cease violence, release those arbitrarily detained, provide full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and create space for meaningful and inclusive dialogue between all parties in Myanmar. The Prime Ministers

affirmed their strong support for the ASEAN *Five-Point Consensus* and encouraged the international community to work together in a pragmatic and constructive way to address the crisis and facilitate national reconciliation in Myanmar.

27. Both Prime Ministers underscored that New Zealand and Singapore are staunch supporters of international law and the principles enshrined in the UN Charter. They agreed that New Zealand and Singapore will continue to work together to strengthen their bilateral relationship and uphold international law and the multilateral system, and to stay in close contact on regional and global issues of concern. The Prime Ministers acknowledged the significant economic and climate change challenges facing SIDS and agreed to broaden and strengthen existing cooperation together advocating for small states both bilaterally and in multilateral fora, including through the Commonwealth.

## **ANNEX**

### **INITIATIVES FOR THE NEW 'SUPPLY CHAIN AND CONNECTIVITY' PILLAR UNDER THE SINGAPORE-NEW ZEALAND ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP**

- Singapore and New Zealand have signed the following new food security and trade arrangements:
  - Arrangement on Cooperation for Electronic Invoicing
  - Arrangement on Facilitating Safe and Efficient Trade
- New Zealand has extended an invitation for a Singapore Food Security Mission to visit New Zealand in 2024.
- Singapore and New Zealand have agreed to negotiate an Implementing Arrangement (under the Singapore-New Zealand Closer Economic Partnership) between Singapore and New Zealand on the use of Electronic Certification for Trade in Primary Products.
- Singapore and New Zealand have completed Phase I of the e-certification programme and will begin work on Phase II.
- Singapore and New Zealand have agreed to launch negotiations for the Agreement on Trade in Essential Supplies.
- New Zealand has offered ASEAN Agri-business scholarships to two Singaporeans to travel to New Zealand in 2024 under the Manaaki programme.
- Singapore and New Zealand will prioritise workstreams expanding commercial relationships and cooperation on freight supply chains issues under the Singapore-New Zealand Supply Chains Working Group.