**STATEMENT BY SINGAPORE’S HEAD OF DELEGATION PRIME MINISTER’S SPECIAL ENVOY, COORDINATING MINISTER FOR INFRASTRUCTURE AND MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT MR KHAW BOON WAN AT THE 2ND ASIA COOPERATION DIALOGUE SUMMIT IN BANGKOK, THAILAND, 10 OCTOBER 2016**

**1 As noted by many speakers before me, we are meeting at a time when the world is experiencing great anxiety and uncertainty. Seven years after the Global Financial Crisis, almost all economies are still performing below their potential. Workers are naturally anxious about their jobs, and many find their wages stagnating. Meanwhile, the refugee crisis in Europe has stirred immense anti-immigrant sentiments. Protectionist and anti-globalisation mood has put many governments under pressure. Political consensus in support of free trade seems to be in danger of fracturing.**

**2 Fortunately, compared to the rest of the world, Asia is not doing too badly. Our region remains dynamic and it continues to offer many business opportunities. The middle class population is growing rapidly and our infrastructure can still do with much more investments. Civil aviation, for example, is a rapidly growing sector. Almost all Asian airports are adding new runways and terminal buildings.**

**3 Indeed, for the past few decades, Asia has led global growth. But of course, Asia too has its own challenges. Rapid change brings its own set of problems. Each country has its own preoccupations, including from low birth rate to rapid ageing. We are also not immune from the uncertain economic outlook of our major markets in the US and Europe. In economic terms, the potential growth in Asia has fallen by 2 percentage points from the peak in 2007.**

**4 We cannot avoid the volatilities in the economic climate. But we can harness our region’s rich resources and strengths to achieve sustainable growth and prosperity. Notwithstanding considerable global headwinds, the Asian Development Bank has projected that developing countries in Asia will continue to drive 60% of world growth.**

**5 Against a weakened global environment, taking practical and realistic steps to strengthen cooperation within Asia has become increasingly important. Singapore therefore welcomes Thailand’s initiative to launch the ACD Vision for Asia Cooperation at this Summit. The ACD Vision will chart a clear long-term direction for the shared interests of our countries. We also welcome the initiative to consolidate the original 20 areas of cooperation into six pillars and this will sharpen the ACD focus and enhance its effectiveness.**

**6 We know that our efforts towards sustainable and inclusive growth will be less effective if governments operate in isolation. Working together, we have much to gain. Beyond governments, we can also benefit from public-private collaboration to tap on the expertise and innovation of the private sector. Such collaboration in infrastructure and urban development is in fact very common in many countries. Singapore and Malaysia are currently working on a High Speed Rail to link our capital cities. While Government-led, the project will almost certainly involve and benefit from private participation. In this regard, we encourage the engagement of relevant stakeholders by ACD and I look forward to the recommendations of the private sector representatives later this afternoon.**

**7 Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to Thailand for its leadership as ACD Chair, and for the excellent arrangement and very warm hospitality for this Summit. I also look forward to the chairmanship of the United Arab Emirates and the 15th ACD Ministerial Meeting in Abu Dhabi in January next year.**

**Thank you.**

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