

19 JULY 2017
SPEECH BY HE MOHAMED ABULKHEIR
AMBASSADOR OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT
AT THE CELEBRATION OF THE NATIONAL DAY OF EGYPT
SINGAPORE, 25 JULY 2017

Your Excellency Indranee Rajah, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Law
Excellences Members of Parliament, Mr Lim Biow Chuan and Mr Christopher De Souza

The occasion was the celebration of the 65th Anniversary of the 1952 Revolution. The peaceful revolution that marked the birth of the Arab Republic of Egypt reinforced the Egyptian identity and the fundamentals of the Egyptian State said Ambassador HE <Name>. Since the days of the Pharaohs, Egypt has always had the fundamentals of the state: the land, the people, and the government. Egyptians, since that time, have always had their own distinctive identity, and they have always succeeded in preserving it throughout their history, while being conquered from various parts of the world.

Egypt today is dealing with its economic and social challenges, it is also facing the rising challenge of terrorism, which has escalated after the Egyptian people spoke out in the June 2013 revolution, against the attempts to change the Egyptian Cultural Identity, and the policies of marginalization and exclusion of political forces, that Egyptians have witnessed during the one year rule of the Muslim Brotherhood, whom proved to be directly linked to the radical ideology of religious extremism and terrorism. The Egyptian people were able to enforce their will that sought their departure from power, and voted for President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, who represents the direction of the country they are opting for.

Terrorists started by targeting innocent civilians in Cairo and elsewhere. Egyptians reacted by reinstating their will by moving ahead with their daily lives, in spite of the fear of bombs exploding on roadsides. They have further reaffirmed their position by tolerating the current harsh economic reforms in favor of not reverting to that ideology. Now, terrorists are targeting our honorable men of the military, police, in addition to civilians especially Egyptian Christian Copts, with the aim of dividing the society and crumpling the State, to bring back their religious extremist ideology to rule Egypt. This, will not happen. The will of the Egyptian people will always prevail.

And here, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to highlight an important point of intersection between Egypt and Singapore. The identity. Singaporeans have created their unique distinctive identity from different ethnicities and religions, and have done a commendable job in not only preserving it, but in also creating a model for coexistence in peace and harmony, while at the same time, bringing Singapore from “Third to First” in less than 50 years. I cannot but pay tribute to the Great Lee Kuan Yew – God bless his soul - for building a country that has become more than impressive, in a remarkable time.

Egyptians and Singaporeans face the common challenge of preserving their identity, at a time of the rising challenge of countering religious extremism and terrorism, which aims at imposing its radical ideology on our countries. These common challenges further bring Egypt and Singapore closer together.

Excellences, Distinguished Guests,

The bilateral relations between Egypt and Singapore were established on the 28th of November 1966, almost a year after the independence of Singapore on the 9th of August 1965. Egypt was amongst the first countries to recognize the independence of Singapore, and was the first Arab country to establish diplomatic ties; it supported Singapore to join the Non-Aligned Movement, which was a source of further recognition of Singapore's independence. On the other hand, Singapore supported Egypt when there was a move to suspend its membership at the Non-Aligned Movement, as a result of the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement.

Egypt and Singapore's long lasting friendship has grown steadily over the years. The two countries share common interests and positions on different global issues; there is a strong political coordination and collaboration in international organizations and other fora. The bilateral political consultations mechanism further enhances such a coordination and cooperation.

People-to-people ties have grown with thousands of Singaporeans having studied at Al-Azhar University in Cairo

over the years, Many of them became religious teachers and distinguished community leaders in Singapore. The cooperation between Al Azhar and Singapore has been recently further intensified to face the rising threat of religious extremism and terrorism, with the strong determination of Al Azhar to counter the extremist interpretation of Islam and spread its true teachings. This is done through the participation of Singaporean Islamic Leaders and scholars in conferences and training courses designed for that purpose.

On the other hand, there has been an increased Egyptians participation in the Singapore's Technical Cooperation Programs, where Egyptian Officials have benefited from the unique Singaporean experience in the different fields of the economy and governance, which included anti-corruption, port management, civil aviation, trade and investment.

Over the years, the bilateral relations witnessed the exchange of high level visits in different fields, they included the speakers of the parliament, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, irrigation, finance, environment, administrative development, trade and industry, telecommunication, international cooperation and the Mufti of both Egypt and Singapore.

Distinguished Guests,

The economic relations between Egypt and Singapore have witnessed a turning point with the visit of President El Sisi to Singapore in August 2015, the first ever by an Egyptian head of state, followed by President Tony Tan's visit to Egypt in October 2016, his first visit to the Middle East, which marked the 50th Anniversary of the bilateral relations between the two countries.

The visits gave a boost to an increased Singaporean participation in developing the Suez Canal Economic Zone, to serve as a regional hub rather than a transit point for ships, benefiting from Singapore's experience in developing a regional hub, in less than 30 years.

The visits opened new avenues of cooperation in the fields of Public Administration; Water Resource Management; Port Management; Education; Civil aviation; Vocational training; Information technology; E-governance; Small and Medium Enterprises.

These new avenues will build on the current success stories of economic cooperation between Egypt and Singapore, which include:

Olam International, one of the biggest Singaporean agricultural companies in the world, is investing in Egypt in dehydrated onion and processed herbs, and today is exporting to the Middle East, Europe, Brazil and Japan.

BW Gas, a Norwegian-Singaporean company, provides one of the two floating gas platforms to meet Egypt's domestic gas needs; Pacific International Lines (PIL), recently opened a sizable logistics facility in Egypt and is planning to launch more; Meinhardt will plan and execute an industrial city on the outskirts of Cairo, and will expand its office in Cairo to serve as a regional resource center for its projects in the Middle East; SSA is implementing its Joe Academy program in the field of education and Entrepreneurship, and intends to expand its presence in Egypt.

Discussions are underway with PSA in the fields of port management and development not only in the Suez Canal Economic Zone, but also for other Egyptian ports.

Other Singaporean companies are looking more towards Egypt, especially in light of the current positive economic prospects.

Egypt's economy is slowly but surely recovering from the aftermath of the recent political turmoil. On July 13, 2017, the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund completed the first review of Egypt's economic reform program, under the three-year arrangement reached with the IMF last November for a US\$12 billion loan to support Egypt's homemade program to reform the economy. The completion of the review allows Egypt to draw the second tranche of the loan, which is about US\$1.25 billion.

The successful completion of the review is considered to be a vote of confidence by the IMF in the continued implementation of the Egyptian economic reform program.

This further lays the ground for a more enhanced economic cooperation between Egypt and Singapore.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

God Bless Egypt, God Bless Singapore.

Thank you.