

**SPEECH BY SPEAKER SEAH KIAN PENG
AT THE SIXTH WORLD CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENT
FOR THE GENERAL DEBATE ON THE THEME
“A WORLD IN TURMOIL: PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION AND
MULTILATERALISM FOR PEACE, JUSTICE AND PROSPERITY FOR ALL”
IN GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
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Excellencies,

2 Good afternoon. We are meeting at this 6th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament amidst profound uncertainties in the world order, where we must re-evaluate old ways of cooperation and seek new solutions in an era of increased volatility, vulnerabilities and protectionism.

3 In recent years, supply chain disruptions, protracted regional conflicts, and tariffs imposition, have heightened concerns about overall security and trade. The global rules that once brought stability are now challenged, with economic nationalism replacing win-win cooperation. The multilateral trading system that had lifted countless lives out of poverty and fostered global growth, is under strain.

4 For small countries like Singapore, we risk being marginalised. To tackle these concerns head-on, Singapore has formed a taskforce comprising our Government, employers and unions. We are united in our resolve to strengthen our collective

sensemaking, mitigate impact on businesses and workers, and support the development of new capabilities, markets and supply chains.

5 But strength does not stem purely from conviction. Regardless of size, no man is an island. Regardless of might, no state is a continent. As we chart the rough seas of evolving global threats, we will struggle if we do so with cynical isolationism.

6 This is why I am heartened by the theme for this Conference and for our joint Declaration. In the face of turmoil, it reminds us of the hope and promise of parliamentary cooperation and of multilateralism.

7 Hope is a good thing! The challenges we face today – environmental, technology, economic and geopolitics – are all unprecedented. But it is precisely in such times that call for our leadership. The time is now.

8 As parliamentarians, we should help inspire public debate, uphold democratic practices, and steer legislative outcomes. Ours is a responsibility to promote peace and understanding amongst different countries and cultures, even when it is tempting to sow distrust.

9 Excellencies, the promise of multilateralism is the promise that any challenge can be resolved with collective solutions. It can only be realised when we act with moral leadership, when we persist with wisdom, and when we push on with like-minded partners and nations. Let me suggest two areas to focus our efforts.

10 First, we must strengthen and reform our multilateral institutions, including the WTO and the UN. While not perfect, these institutions remain essential foundations for a rules-based order. We need to update the rulebooks, whilst promoting "flexible multilateralism" that allows like-minded partners to advance important issues, while keeping doors open for others.

11 Second, we must deepen regional integration and forge agile partnerships. In an increasingly fragmented world, we need to build stronger regional frameworks for cooperation – especially in trade, digital connectivity and climate change. These partnerships can serve as building blocks for a more robust multilateral system stretching beyond and across regions.

12 As we sail through these uncharted waters, we may not know where we will land. But if we want a future with freedom, justice and peace for all, it can only be founded upon the recognition of the dignity and rights of every person, and upon

the collective will and courage to protect them with the rule of law. In 1948, the UN enshrined these principles with the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

13 Excellencies, let us not forget these principles. Let us recommit ourselves to strengthening multilateral cooperation. Let us work together to build a more stable, equitable and prosperous world. Thank you.
