

Press Statement with His Excellency Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of the Republic of Singapore

PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE:

Mr Turnbull, Ministers, ladies and gentleman of the press. I would like to welcome Prime Minister Turnbull to Singapore for his first official visit, reciprocating his warm hospitality for my visit to Canberra last October.

This visit is the second Annual Singapore Australia Leaders' Summit and our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, or CSP.

We had very good discussions this morning on a wide range of issues, regional and economic. We exchanged views on developments in the United States, in Europe, in Asia, as well as our concerns over the recent terrorist attacks in the West and in our part of the world.

Singapore and Australia are both outward-oriented and trade-dependent countries. We want a peaceful and orderly world, an open and inclusive international system where countries big and small can prosper.

That's why we are both friends with all the major powers. We see the United States continuing to play a major role fostering peace and stability in Asia.

We also welcome China's engagement in the region because for both Singapore and Australia, China is our largest trading partner. Constructive initiatives such as the 'One Belt, One Road', can promote greater regional cooperation and development.

The strategic alignment between Singapore and Australia is why we work closely on regional trade initiatives like the TPP and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, or RCEP.

Mr Turnbull took the lead in resuming TPP talks among the remaining 11 members after the US withdrew from the TPP. It shows Australia's continued commitment to regional cooperation and to free trade.

Singapore agrees with and supports the TPP 11 deal.

Mr Turnbull and I also agreed on the importance of ASEAN centrality in an open and inclusive regional architecture. We welcome Australia's continued engagement with ASEAN and participation in the East Asia Summit. Next year Singapore is the ASEAN chair and we look forward to the special ASEAN-Australia Summit, which will be in Sydney in March.

Last October in Canberra, we signed significant agreements on economic integration, defence cooperation and innovation. I'm happy that since then, we have made progress.

The upgraded Singapore-Australia FTA will come into force this year. We are making progress in the joint development of the military training areas in Queensland and we deeply appreciate Australia's continued support for Singapore's SPF training needs, which will benefit both defence forces and the local economy in the towns where these happen. We look forward to this arrangement being finalised in a treaty next year.

Today, we have just witnessed two agreements signed on new areas of collaboration.

On innovation, to increase collaboration and joint funding to promote advanced manufacturing and data science to address the challenges of future economies.

And on cyber-security, to build on existing cooperation to combat cyber-threats and support regional capacity building.

These are good, new initiatives.

We also have lighter initiatives, cooperation in the arts and the Australia-Singapore arts group has been doing good work, boosting arts and cultural exchanges. I'm looking forward to opening the Erub Arts Exhibition at the Asian Civilisations Museum with Mr Turnbull tomorrow.

The breadth and depth of our cooperation reflects our enduring, substantial and warm partnership and I thank Prime Minister Turnbull and Australia for their strong support for cooperation and friendship.

Thank you very much.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thank you very much Prime Minister for your characteristically warm welcome.

We are here, friends, very close friends, our formal diplomatic ties go right back to the foundation of Singapore by your father in 1965. But as we remember this morning, solemnly, at the Kranji War Cemetery, Australians fought and died and bled here to defend Singapore. We know that the people of Singapore will never forget that, where we fought together in freedom's cause.

Today, we are bound together by shared values, shared values of commitment to a rules-based international order, to the rule of law in our region, recognising that is that rule of law which has enabled the economic freedom upon which has built the prosperity that has lifted billions out of poverty in our region.

So, we are not – Singapore and Australia – we're not the two biggest nations in our region. Your father memorably spoke about "big fish, small fish and shrimps" how they all have to get on together in the ocean. We work together. We recognise that the closer we work together, sharing those values, the stronger our region will be. The stronger our nations will be, as we advance our future based on freedom.

Now we, of course, have very strong family ties, Lucy and me in particular, here in Singapore. We were delighted, I was delighted to be at the Botanic Gardens this morning, where they very kindly named a new orchid after Lucy and me. It was particularly appealing to our SG50 granddaughter Isla, who was born here in Singapore.

Australia is home to thousands of Singaporeans working in Australia, as indeed, over 25,000 Australians work in Singapore. There are over 130,000 Singaporeans who have studied at Australian universities, including your president and many of your ministers and colleagues. It's wonderful that with the New Colombo Plan – as we were discussing earlier in our meetings – there are 1000 Australian students studying here in Singapore.

Of course, following on from the elevation of the SAFTA, from the latest elevation of our comprehensive strategic partnership, Australian universities have more scope than ever to operate here in Singapore, as they do. So those ties of education, binding together the futures of our two countries get stronger than ever. We're announcing today a new working holiday visa that will enable young people from Singapore and young people from Australia to work in each other's country. That is vitally important, just as is the agreement that we have entered into with the CSIRO, to advance innovation and science, again, where we are working together.

Of course, the digital age produces enormous opportunities and a few countries have progressed to the platform of the smartphone as quickly or as effectively as Singapore. But nonetheless, it brings with it great risks and cyber-security is a vital priority of my Government's national security agenda, as it is of yours. So we are pleased to see the new commitment to strong collaboration in the cyber sphere.

We continue to build on our very strong defence and security relationship. As you noted, discussions are under way to enable your Air Force to continue to operate a training detachment at RAAF Base Pearce for another 25 years. Of course the commitment to the expanded training areas at Shoalwater Bay in Townsville proceeds, bringing enormous opportunities for further collaboration between our defence forces.

In this region, where we face more uncertainty and more threats than we have had for many years, strong collaboration, deep engagement between Australia and Singapore and our defence forces and our security agencies is more important than ever.

You mentioned Prime Minister, the insurgency in the Philippines. The threat of terrorism is with us all. It is a thoroughly transnational threat. Singapore and Australia may once have been regarded as being a long way from the Middle East. Nowhere is a long way from anywhere in the digital age, so that engagement is vitally important.

In the course of our discussions this morning, we have touched on all of those issues. We've talked about trade, we have talked about climate policy, we have discussed the importance of action being taken to stop the reckless conduct of the North Korean regime, threatening the peace and stability of

our region and the world.

We have talked about the strong cultural engagement between Australia and Singapore, and I'm delighted that tomorrow we'll be opening the Torres Strait Erub Art Centre's Exhibition of sculptures at your Asian Civilisations Museum. That is going to be a great feature of the expanded cultural relationship between our two countries.

Of course tonight, I'm honoured to be speaking at this year's Shangri-La Dialogue, which brings together the region's senior defence leaders at a time where the pace and scale of change is utterly unprecedented in human history. It's a powerfully important forum and I want to thank you, Prime Minister, for the way in which Singapore has led and hosted this dialogue and enabled greater engagement on these very important issues.

Finally sir, we look forward to working with you as Chair of the ASEAN, to ensure the Australia-ASEAN Special Summit in Sydney in March next year, provides a platform for the very frank and fruitful conversations that we all need to have as we come closer together. More engaged, more committed, more determined to protect the freedom, the rule of law, the way of life that we have built in this region. The foundation of which is that freedom that rule of law, that stability, critically important.

I know we'll both be meeting with the United States Defence Secretary General Mattis over the next few days, and you are meeting General Mattis today. We recognise that the continued strong engagement of the United States as you observed, in this region, manifestly provides that stability, that bedrock, upon which, our prosperity and so much human advancement has been built.

So with shared values, and a common vision, Prime Minister, it's wonderful to be with you.

Thank you for the very good discussions and we look forward to more of them over the weekend and in the years ahead.

[Ends]

New Visa Option to Boost Tourism and Business Ties with Singapore

Singaporeans will have exclusive access to a new long-term, multiple-entry visa option by 1 January 2018, making it easier to travel to Australia for business and pleasure.

The Visitor (Subclass 600) visa will allow travellers to visit Australia for up to three months at a time, over a six-year period, with a single

application.

The new visa option was announced during the Prime Minister's official visit to Singapore, and will further strengthen ties between our two countries.

Alongside Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister Turnbull also announced a new reciprocal Work and Holiday Maker programme will commence on 1 August 2017.

With up to 500 places per year, the programme will allow young people from Australia and Singapore to undertake short term work or study.

Last financial year, more than 230,000 visitor visas were granted to travellers from Singapore, up 16 per cent compared with the previous year.

These new visa arrangements will further boost tourism and business links between Australia and Singapore.

It will make it easier for people to come to Australia to visit friends and family while also enabling business operators to conduct regular meetings or attend conferences in Australia.

These announcements build on the Australia-Singapore Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Applicants must satisfy all usual visa criteria, including health and character requirements and have adequate funds to support themselves for the period of the visit.

Details of the new arrangements will be made available at the [Australian Visa Application Centre's website](#) in Singapore.

[Doorstop in the Singapore Botanic Gardens](#)

Well, good morning.

We began the day at Kranji honouring the fallen Australians, our allies, who fell 75 years ago defending Singapore.

From that time on, our destinies have been linked, Australia's and Singapore's.

We stand together for the rule of law, for freedom in this region and around the world. That will be the focus of my speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue and the focus of the discussions with the Prime Minister of Singapore and the President of Singapore.

The relationships between Australia and Singapore get closer all the time. There are 130,000 graduates of Australian universities here in Singapore, including the President. And we find the closest relations are developing in business, in education, and we are advancing them.

So we are announcing today new initiatives in cyber security, in science and innovation, new visa arrangements, working holiday arrangements so our young people can come and work in the other country. Visa arrangements that enable us to have more engagement of businesses, Australian businesses operating here, Singaporean businesses operating in Australia.

The Singapore-Australia Free Trade Agreement is coming into full force, the latest version of it, the latest advance of it, in September.

And of course, as you know, the Minister for Defence is here with the CDF and we have the closest defence ties with a massive investment in the training facilities in Queensland that are used by the Singapore defence Forces.

We have shared values, shared objectives; the maintenance of a rules-based order, the maintenance of the rule of law, the maintenance of the peace and the harmony in our region. Which has been the foundation for the extraordinary human advancement we've seen in past decades and the extraordinary rise in prosperity in our region as millions have been lifted out of poverty.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, are you expecting a push when you meet James Mattis, a stronger push for Australia to join in some form of freedom navigation in the South China Sea?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, we assert our right and practice our right of freedom of navigation and overflight throughout the world, and in particular in the South China Sea. So I look forward to the discussions with General Mattis. I met him recently in Afghanistan and I'm sure that we'll cover the full range of topics.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister, the President of the United States has pulled out of the Paris Climate Agreements. What do you think about that and what is the future of the deal now?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well the President's announcement is not a surprise. It was a very core campaign commitment of his – It is disappointing. We would prefer the United States to remain part of the agreement. We are committed to the Paris agreement. We are on track to meet our 2030 targets of a reduction in emissions by 26 to 28 per cent from 2005 levels. And, I should say we are doing well. Our emissions, whether measures against by head of population or by, against GDP are the lowest they've been for 27 years.

The important thing is to ensure that we maintain energy supplies that are affordable, that are reliable, secure and that we meet our emissions targets and we are on track to do just that. That's our commitment, our energy policy is grounded in economics and engineering. Not in ideology like the Labor Party's.

JOURNALIST:

What do you think of the future of beyond 2020 of climate change action globally?

PRIME MINISTER:

Dennis, the momentum towards a lower emissions energy sector is irresistible. It is driven in large part by technology, you know you have seen in the United States for example it has been driven by an all of the above approach to energy. In the state of Texas, who's Governor I spoke to very recently, they have made huge strides in every technology; wind, solar, gas, coal – integrating all of them as they move to maintain reliable, affordable energy and at the same time reduce emissions. It is critically important that energy policy is driven by economics and engineering.

And so you can see that under my government, we have taken the initiative. For example, to ensure that we have the storage that you need in a world where you have more renewable energy, where you have more variable energy, intermittent energy, like wind and solar, you need more storage. Labor has never given that a thought, most unfortunately of course, for South Australia which has that enormous wind resource that can provide either all of the state's electricity at one minute and then at the next none. They gave no thought to energy reliability. We're planning ahead and so you see our commitment to Snowy Hydro 2.0. So we have a practical approach to deliver those three things, affordability, reliability and security and of course meeting those emissions reduction targets.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister your own Party Room is protesting this, or is applauding the US decision in some quarters and Eric Abetz I understand says its reason enough for Australia to pull out of the Paris Accord. Have you got a pretty serious insurrection to deal with on this issue when you get back to Australia or not?

PRIME MINISTER:

President Trump's position on this matter has been very, very well known. In fact, as I said, his announcement today from our point of view is disappointing, but not at all surprising. It was entirely as expected, as predicted and as promised by him. So and in the light of that, in the light of that knowledge, we are committed to our Paris commitments, our 2030 commitments as I said, of 26 to 28 per cent reduction in emissions.

JOURNALIST:

Prime Minister you spoke of the success of allied troops in the Middle East, given that that is likely to lead to the prevalence to Islamic State in our region, is there a regional strategy to combat this? Particularly with the battle-lines not quite as clear as Iraq or Syria.

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes well I'll be addressing that tonight in my speech and also in our bilateral discussions.

The threat of Islamist terrorism gets worse in our region, you will have seen the battle that is going on in the city of Marawi in the Southern Philippines, where ISIL-backed terrorists have seized a city and the Philippines armed forces are expelling them now. That battle is going on.

The threat of returning foreign fighters is a very real one. Our goal is to destroy ISIL in the field in the Middle East, to kill as many of those terrorists in the Middle East as we can. That's our commitment. Now, I make no apologies for that, that's our goal, to destroy them in the field. My Government changed the law to ensure that our armed forces have the legal ability to do so. I removed an ambiguity, a concern that was there, so that our armed forces have the ability to target terrorists in whatever role they are in in that battle space.

Now, in terms of fighters coming back to the region, that is a real risk. There is no question about that. And the answer is, again as I'll be saying tonight, closer engagement and cooperation between the nations in this region. We already are working very closely, but we need to do more.

It is vital that we recognise that terrorism is transnational. You know what happens, the Middle East may seem a long way away from Singapore. In 2017, it isn't. It may seem a long way away from Australia. In 2017, it isn't. In a hyper-connected world, everything is transnational, everything is global, and our response must be as decisive and emphatic and global as the threat that is presented to us. We have to be more agile than those who seek to do us harm.

JOURNALIST:

What assistance can Australia provide to the Philippines, and is willing to provide to the Philippines? That's where the battle is closer to home?

PRIME MINISTER:

The answer is that we are able to, we have a good relationship with the Philippines and we do provide assistance in intelligence. Of course we do. I mean it is vitally important that we share information about this terrorist threat, because it threatens all of us. You know, we all have a common interest. More than a common interest; an absolute vested interest in the defeat of these Islamist terrorists. This terrorist movement, wherever it occurs in this world, it is all connected. That's the critical insight. So we're all in it together and we all have a vested interest in defeating them.

JOURNALIST:

Eric Abetz has called for the Finkel review to be delayed in order for scientists to consider Trump's pulling out of the Paris agreement. Do you think that's necessary?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well the answer is no. The Finkel review was commissioned by COAG, by the Council of Australian Governments. So that's both the Federal Government and the state and territory governments. And that review will be presented at the next COAG meeting in a week and governments will respond to it. So it's on track to be presented.

But you know, I want to say this; the commitments that we have, we have made, are in Australia's interest. We are committed to ensuring that Australians have affordable and reliable energy and that we meet our emission reduction targets.

There is a massive national and indeed global interest in achieving that and maintaining energy, but you cannot be ideological about it. You have to be very hard-headed. That's why when people say Australia should not export coal to India, for example – what a self-defeating proposition that is. The Indians need to generate much more electricity. They need to quadruple their production of electricity between now and 2033 and they're absolutely committed to using more renewables. Indeed Prime Minister Modi established a global solar alliance, he is so committed to solar energy. Mr Adani has the largest solar farm in India. They take a practical, hard-headed all of the above approach, and so do we.

So you can achieve and you must achieve those three goals. If we didn't export, if we decided never to export coal to India, they would simply buy it from somewhere else. It would not reduce global emissions by one kilogram, let alone one tonne.

So the vital thing is to have an informed, hard-headed, practical approach to this. That is what I am delivering. That's what I my government is delivering and we will get on with it. Economics, engineering, that's the key.

JOURNALIST:

When you say it wouldn't reduce – you could have the prospect of the Adani mine, such a big one, actually deflating global coal prices, making it cheaper and more affordable to burn coal. So, what do you base that on, that definitive statement it won't increase emissions by one kilogram?

PRIME MINISTER:

It is based on a very good understanding of India's energy situation. When I was in India recently, I discussed it with the Prime Minister and the energy minister and indeed leaders of their energy sector and they will, coal will be, in India, it will be a smaller share of their generation mix over time. But in absolute terms they will burn more coal because they have to crank up

their energy production, so that Indians have access to all of the wonderful services and devices and appliances – air conditioning and lighting – that we have. You know, this is all part of Prime Minister Modi's development agenda. So their calculation is – while they certainly aim to move to a lower emissions future, in the medium term, they are going to be having to import more coal. Now, if they don't import it from us, I hope that this doesn't come as a surprise to anyone, they will import it from somewhere else and it won't be as high a quality coal.

So that's why I say, those people who oppose the Carmichael Mine on the environmental, global emissions basis, are being self-defeating. They're either deciding that Indian's should not have electricity or Queenslanders should not have jobs. Because I promise you, India will burn more coal in the years ahead and then some decades from now, that will decline. They want to move to a clean energy future. Of course they do. But at the same time, they have to deliver the rise in standards of living and the economic growth of their people this they deserve and demand.

JOURNALIST:

There is already a feeling in the region that there's a bit of concern around the uncertainty of American's foreign policy under the Trump Administration. With Trump pulling out of Paris, do you think that could lead to concerns about where America stands in terms of defence and security in the region?

PRIME MINISTER:

America's commitment to the region and to its stability is fundamental. The peace and relative harmony that we've enjoyed in this region for many decades and that which has been the foundation for all of the economic growth I spoke about a moment ago, has been underpinned by the hard power of the United States. Its sometimes been described as the Pax-Americana, in fact.

But what we're seeing now is a renewed commitment by this Administration because it is plainly in America's interest and in the region's interest for America to be a strong force for stability and peace and the rule of law in our region.

And so, you know you've had visits very early in the administration from the Vice-President, from the Secretary of State, from the Secretary of Defense, who will be here in Singapore. So America's commitment to the peace and the rule of law in our region is an enduring one and will be an enduring one because it is manifestly in the interests of the United States and in the interests of the region and, of course, in the interests of Australia.

Thanks all, thank you all very much.

[ENDS]

Interview with Haidi Lun, Bloomberg

HAIDI LUN:

Prime Minister I know you're off to Singapore soon to deliver this keynote address at the Shangri-La Dialogue, its widely expected to be your most substantial remarks when it comes to geopolitics and foreign policy, defence and security to date. I want to start with Senator John McCain's comments, his, sort of, call for the US and its allies to do more when it comes to countering China in the South China Sea. He's said specifically there should be patrols within 12 nautical miles. Is that something Australia would be considering?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well we maintain and exercise our right to freedom of navigation and overflight throughout the region, and of course over the South China Sea. We repeat the calls that we've made and the solidarity we've shown with other nations in the region including the ASEAN nations to ensure that the rule of law is completed with, that no unilateral actions are taken in the South China Sea, which would exacerbate tensions, and that any territorial disputes are resolved in accordance with the international law.

HAIDI LUN:

China has continued to aggressively build out in the area though. Does that put Australia in a difficult situation given how reliant we are economically and strategically when it comes to our relationship with China?

PRIME MINISTER:

We have a very strong relationship with China. We have a very strong, rock-solid alliance with the United States, that's the bedrock of our whole national security. May I just say this to you? That we will continue to maintain and exercise freedom of navigation and overflight.

HAIDI LUN:

Do you agree with Senator McCain's comments that China is acting more and more like a bully?

PRIME MINISTER:

Senator McCain can speak, and very eloquently, for himself. He had a very good visit here in Australia and we were very honoured to receive him as a very good friend of Australia. He's a wonderful advocate for ANZUS, the Australia-US Alliance. He is and has always been a great friend of Australia.

As far as the relationship with China is concerned, it is important that as China rises, as its economic power grows, as its influence grows, that it does so peacefully and in a manner that respects the rights of all the

countries. It's vitally important.

President Xi has spoken of making sure to avoid the Thucydides trap, referring back to the great history of the war between Athens and Sparta. The historian and general Thucydides said that the real cause of the war, was anxiety created by the rise of Athens. President Xi is very aware of this. It's very important that China – which has been such an enormous beneficiary, none bigger – of the peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region, which has seen harmony over many decades, it is vitally important that China respect that; respects the rule of law, respects the principle that might is not right.

HAI DI LUN:

That sort of leads me to wanting to know more about these comments that your Foreign Minister made, saying that essentially China cannot continue to thrive or reach its full potential as a global player, if it doesn't embrace a rules-based level of democracy. Do you think democratisation is necessary?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I won't comment on your characterisation. I just say this to you; that respecting the rule of law and respecting the rights of other countries, their sovereign rights, in accordance with international law, is absolutely critical. We all have a vested interest in the maintenance of the rule of law in our region. All of us have to work hard together to maintain it. What Australia takes, the message I take to the Shangri-La Dialogue, is the commitment and the leadership – not as a superpower, as a middle power, as a regional power – to work with our partners in the region. The largest powers, the middle powers, everybody. In Lee Kuan Yew's words, 'the big fish, the small fish and the shrimps', to work with everybody to ensure that we maintain that harmony that has been the foundation of so much prosperity and human advancement over these past four decades and more.

HAI DI LUN:

Lee Kuan Yew had less of a challenge than the Presidency does when it comes to China, but as you hinted to earlier, the rhetoric coming from Beijing, from President Xi has been, he's been kind of, a champion of free trade, of the you know, 'new international liberal order'. Is there a sense that there's a vacuum being made by the US becoming more inward looking, retreating essentially? Leaving the gap open for Beijing to take its place?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I'll leave the commentary to you and your colleagues at Bloomberg. From our point of view, we believe –and we know – that free trade and open markets has delivered enormous prosperity to our region. Billions of people have been lifted out of poverty by the peace, the stability and the free trade, the open markets that have depended on that stability. You see, that's the foundation, that is the absolute essential. Put that at risk, then everything else is put at risk. The economic growth is put at risk, your stability is

put at risk, the chances of young people to get ahead and get an education is put at risk.

So that peace, that stability which has been the foundation of our prosperity in the region, that is what we must work hard to maintain. That's why it's important that all of the nations, particularly those in the region, come together at the Shangri-La Dialogue, recognise that; understand each other, understand their perspectives and work more closely together.

HEIDI LUN:

Do you support Beijing becoming a greater international power? Do you think China is ready?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well China is already a great power. China is a quarter of the world's population. It is the second largest economy by most measures and will shortly be the largest. By some measures, it already is the largest. China's rise has been extraordinarily rapid. I mean, it is one of the elements, one of the biggest elements in the nature of the times in which we live.

We're living in a time of change unprecedented in its scale and pace. You think about this. 40 years ago, China was barely engaged in the global economy. Then Deng Xiaoping came south and he opened up China to the world. He began that process and remember when he said – the great Chinese navigator Zheng He – when he sailed down through the Pacific and into the Indian Ocean: "In those days, when China was open to the world it was strong. Then when it closed it became weak", he said. "China must be open to the world again".

That process has all taken place in the lifetimes of most of us. It has been so rapid. Of course that is why, naturally, it can create tensions and anxieties. This is what President Xi recognises. He recognises the point when he says China must avoid the Thucydides trap. That's why it's important for China, as it grows, as its influence grows, as its economic power grows – these are all natural developments – but what it must do is build confidence. Build confidence that as a big neighbour and the bigger neighbour, it will be a good neighbour. That's why the confidence building, the respect for the rule of law, the respect for the sovereign rights of other countries, large and small, is important.

HAI DI LUN:

Just as an example, with all the same [inaudible] this year, is taking a more assertive stance when it comes to dealing with North Korea, with that special relationship, a timely test of how China can prove itself?

PRIME MINISTER:

Yes well, North Korea's conduct is reckless, dangerous and becoming more so. It threatens the peace of the region and in fact threatens the peace of the world. China has enormous leverage over North Korea. North Korea is not a

client state like East Germany was to the Soviet Union, that's true. China has had many frustrations in its dealing with Pyongyang. But nonetheless, the fact of the matter remains that China has the greatest leverage over North Korea. With the greatest leverage, comes the greatest responsibility. So we will do our part, sanctions of course. But we look to Beijing to bring the pressure to bear on the regime in Pyongyang, to bring it to its senses. To bring it to its senses so that it ceases threatening the peace of the region with its reckless conduct.

HAI DI LUN:

The recent G7 Prime Minister, seemed to portend something of a seismic shift when it comes to global alliances. Angela Merkel suggesting that Germany cannot continue to rely on the US, on the UK, that Europeans must take charge of their own destiny. If such, you know, an alliance steeped in tradition, in deep friendship, the post-War alliance can be looking so fractured at the moment, what does that mean for Australia? You say that, you know, the US and Australia have these shared values, this special relationship. But do we really?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well of course we do. Our alliance is stronger than ever. The Australia-US Alliance is more important than ever, as President Trump and I demonstrated when we were together on the *USS Intrepid* in New York a little while ago. Our commitment, the commitment of our two nations, based on our history, based on our shared values, based on our mutual interests, is stronger than ever.

You know, it is 99 years since the first time Australians and Americans went into combat together in the First World War. Since that time, in every major conflict, Australia has stood with the United States. We are the firmest of allies.

Now having said that, everyone has to pull their weight. We understand that and we are doing that. We are bringing our defence expenditure up to two per cent of GDP. Under my Government, we are making the biggest investment in our defence capabilities in peacetime in our history. A massive expansion of our defence capabilities, building a whole sovereign defence industry here in Australia. So we recognise that everyone must play their part and Australia is doing precisely that.

HAI DI LUN:

Is there a concern though that President Trump has proven himself to be irrational at times? Erratic, shall say when it comes to policy decisions and at other times, transactional. Is that level of good faith between Australia and the US something that can still be applied?

PRIME MINISTER:

The relationship is in the very best of health. Look, the relationship between the United States and Australia is as strong as any relationship could be. It is based on history, shared values, common interests, the

closest possible engagement at every level. Defence, political, economic, business, people-to-people, family. It is the closest possible relationship and it gets stronger all the time. As a symbol of that, as an example of that, you saw the celebration, the commemoration of the Battle of the Coral Sea on the *Intrepid* in New York. Of course the President and I both spoke as we honoured those old veterans of that conflict, men in their nineties who turned the hinge of fate, who saved Australia, turned the course of the Second World War when they were teenagers in the Australian and US navies.

HAI DI LUN:

Prime Minister I want to talk about this issue of intelligence sharing. In light of the leaks from Manchester, in light of these reports that President Trump shared confidential information with senior Russian officials, have you sought on behalf of Australia, assurances that intelligence shared will be maintained as being classified?

PRIME MINISTER:

The intelligence relationship, as you know, between Australia and the United States is also intensely close, the Five Eyes arrangements. We have every confidence in the confidentiality of the intelligence we share with our friends in the United States, just as they do in the confidence we give to the intelligence that they share with us. But I want to say to you that intelligence is more important than ever and in particular in the battle against terrorism. It is a global phenomenon. You know, the global threat of Islamist terrorism extends from Europe, to the Middle East, to Asia, to the Americas, to Australia. So the sharing of intelligence, not just between the Five Eyes but between all nations that are committed to defeating this scourge, is more important than ever.

HAI DI LUN:

Have you sought assurances from President Trump?

PRIME MINISTER:

I can assure you, we are assured, always assured of the strongest security and the strongest confidentiality as between our intelligence services. It is a relationship of many decades standing and one which is – again – as rock-solid and part of the Alliance.

HAI DI LUN:

President Trump has suggested that the US may withdraw from the Paris Accord on climate change, what would that mean for US leadership? What would it mean for the Paris accord?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well, the Paris Agreement has been entered into by over 140 countries including Australia. We are committed to it. As I've said publically, both recently and since last year, the United States will obviously make its own

decision. But Australia will remain committed to the Paris Agreement. When we enter into national agreements, we stick with them. We are on track to meet our emission reduction targets in accordance with the Paris Treaty and we are committed to that.

HAIDI LUN:

There's [inaudible] Donald Trump [inaudible] special relationship with Australia and the United States, we've spoken of that in this conversation. But when you take a look at a President who is against free trade, who is protectionist, who is against refugees, against multiculturalism you could say and against tackling climate change, what are the shared values?

PRIME MINISTER:

Well I don't agree with all of those premises. I mean you talk about trade for example, President Trump has talked about fair trade. He wants to do more trade agreements, but he wants to do ones on better terms. So he is a businessman, that's been his whole life's experience. He wants to engage in trade, he's been an international businessman. But he wants to do so on the best terms he can negotiate. Well, that's, he's entitled to do that. I guess every national leader seeks to do that. But from our part, we have no doubt that free trade, open markets, advancing the economic integration, particularly in our region, has been to the enormous benefit of our region. Plainly so. That is why we all have a vested interest in maintain it.

HAIDI LUN:

Is there an interest or a sense that given the shifting sands of alliances, Australia should be rebalancing it's ties towards China?

PRIME MINISTER:

We have a very strong relationship, a very good relationship with China, with our largest trading partner in terms of [inaudible]. In terms of our economic relationship, you'd say the United States would be a larger one given the scale of their investment in Australia, but we have strong economic relations with both China and the United States. But we have, with the United States, an alliance. An alliance based on decades of shared values, shared interests, common, mutual service in freedoms cause around the world. So there isn't a question of choice. We have a very good friend in Beijing and we have a good friend and a steadfast ally in Washington.

HAIDI LUN:

Prime Minister one last word on the domestic policy agenda, you know, it feels that voters perhaps are a little bit confused. Because before you became Prime Minister, you had very clear views when it comes to same sex marriage, when it comes to tackling climate change. Since then you have not really taken a stand on some of these issues. What would you say to voters who might be wondering what your policy platform is right now.

PRIME MINISTER:

Our policy is very clear. I mean you ask about climate change, we are committed to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with our commitments under the Paris Treaty. Which is, reducing from 2005 levels by 26 to 28 per cent by 2030. It is one of the highest per capita reduction targets, which is of course, the best comparable measure. So it is a very substantial commitment and we have the measures and policies in place to achieve that. Of course we are making very substantial commitments. Look at the commitment that we've made to expand the Snowy Hydro Scheme. This is the largest expansion of pumped hydro storage in Australia and indeed in the Southern Hemisphere. Of course, it is storage that makes renewables reliable. The challenge that as we move to a more distributed model of electricity generation and you have more wind and solar in particular, you know, the costs of those technologies is coming down, that's been one of the big technological advances, nonetheless they are variable or intermittent sources of generation. So storage is important, batteries are important. Of course, at a large scale, there is no substitute at least currently for pumped hydro. We're talking about a massive expansion here just in the Snowy scheme alone. There are other projects being worked on in that vein. So my Government is taking the lead and doing the practical things to ensure that we meet our climate change commitments. You asked me about same sex marriage. I support it, but we went to the election, as you know, with a commitment to have a national vote on the matter, a plebiscite. If the Labor Party had not blocked that in the Senate, it would have been held by now, some months ago. It would have been held in February. I've no doubt the Australian people would have voted yes. Same sex marriage would now be legal. So the only reason that has not happened is because of the political gaming and tactics of Mr Shorten and the Labor Party. Mr Shorten, who I might add, three years ago, actually said he supported a plebiscite on the issue.

HAIDI LUN:

Prime Minister thank you so much for your time.

PRIME MINISTER:

Thanks Haidi.

[ENDS]

[Visit to Singapore](#)

From 2 – 4 June, I will make my first official visit as Prime Minister to Singapore.

I will deliver the keynote address at the opening of the 16th Shangri-La Dialogue, and will hold the second Australia-Singapore annual leaders' talks with Singaporean Prime Minister, Mr Lee Hsien Loong.

The Shangri-La Dialogue is the largest and most important annual gathering of defence ministers, defence force chiefs and senior security officials in the Indo-Pacific. It provides an important opportunity to set out Australia's vision for a stable, prosperous and rules-based region built on open economies.

My meeting with Prime Minister Lee will be a timely opportunity to exchange views on the changing strategic landscape and the importance of regional institutions, including ASEAN and the East Asia Summit, in ensuring regional stability and economic prosperity.

We will also review the excellent progress made across the four pillars of our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: trade and economic, defence and security, innovation and science cooperation and cultural exchange.

Australia's relationship with Singapore is one of the closest and most comprehensive in the region. It is a relationship built on complementary economies and shared strategic interests.

I look forward to further strengthening the links between our two economies, our institutions and our people.