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**LAUNCH OF THE RSIS CENTRE FOR  
NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY (NTS) STUDIES  
6 MAY 2008  
TRADERS HOTEL, SINGAPORE**

Minister for the Environment and Water Resources of Singapore, Dr Yaacob Ibrahim

Secretary-General of ASEAN, Dr. Surin Pitsuwan,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure this morning to welcome you to the official launch of the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University. Let me also take this opportunity to welcome members of the Consortium of NTS Studies in Asia (NTS-Asia) who are represented here today. Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to join us on this special occasion.

Since 1999, the study of Non-Traditional Security (NTS) has been one of the key areas of academic and policy research at RSIS. The NTS programme began as a response to understand the emergence of new security challenges, brought on among others, by the impact of globalization. For example, Asia, particularly East Asia, had to deal with the devastating consequences of the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Many states and people in this region are still grappling with the difficult aftermath of that crisis. Similarly, the SARS crisis of 2003 demonstrated how easily diseases could be transmitted in an era of

globalised air travel. The RSIS NTS programme therefore has been structured along different themes—reflecting the new security challenges facing Asia such as the problem of poverty and human security, irregular migration, threats from pandemics, climate change, the environment, resource scarcity like water and energy, transnational crime and many others.

Funded by a generous grant from the Ford Foundation, the development of the NTS programme had gone through 3 phases. In the first phase from 1999 to 2001, RSIS successfully carried out a project on Non-Traditional Security Issues in Southeast Asia in conjunction with the Regional Center for Strategic Studies, Colombo, and the United Nations University, Tokyo. This phase was characterized by discussions on non-traditional aspects of security as they relate to Southeast Asia in the post-Cold War regional security environment. A select group of 26 scholars were commissioned to examine NTS issues in Southeast Asia. They identified and analyzed key trends and developments in important issue areas: aspects of globalization, regional institutions, governance in plural societies, and environmental security in individual states or Southeast Asia as a whole. The studies that resulted from these fruitful discussions illuminated many facets of the Southeast Asian security environment that had not been accorded the attention they deserved in more conventional regional security analyses.

RSIS continued to raise awareness of NTS issues and encourage academics and policymakers to consider their impact on Southeast Asia. In July 2001, a workshop on Non-Traditional Security Issues in Southeast Asia was held in Singapore to disseminate the findings of the project to a select group of senior military officers, academics, and media representatives from across the region. A pan-Asian conference under the title Asian Security in the 21st Century: Globalisation, Environment and Governance was also organized 3 months later in October, in collaboration with the South Asia and Northeast Asia coordinators of the Ford project on NTS issues.

Following the success of the first phase, the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of NTS programme which commenced in 2003 expanded the scope of studying NTS issues in the post-Cold war environment by looking beyond Southeast Asia and going for an Asia-wide perspective on the how these NTS issues were securitized. The project was structured to include a widening list of transnational security issues challenges such as: Infectious diseases and Human security in the Asia-Pacific; Environment Resource Development and Management; Illegal Migration; Transnational Crime; Small Arms and Light Weapons; Poverty and Food Security. Thus, in addition to advancing the debate on the importance of analyzing NTS issues, the second phase sought to promote a better understanding among policy makers of how the processes of securitization or desecuritization can help the formulation of more effective and appropriate policies towards NTS issues. The results of these significant studies were published in a well-received volume entitled, *NTS in Asia: the Dynamics of Securitisation*.

With the growing interest on NTS issues, RSIS established the *Consortium on Non-Traditional Security Studies in Asia (NTS-Asia)* in January 2007, thanks to the continued support of the Ford Foundation. The NTS-Asia is a regional consortium which brings together 14 research institutes and think tanks from across Asia and is committed to advancing the study of non-traditional security issues. This is done through its wide range of activities from research projects, dissemination seminars, regional workshops and research fellowships. RSIS functions as the Consortium's secretariat of NTS-Asia.

The upgrading therefore of the NTS programme to a Centre for NTS Studies marks yet another milestone for the study of NTS in RSIS. With its international and multi-disciplinary research staff, the Centre for NTS Studies will initially launch key programmes of critical concern to the region. These are **Pandemics and Security**, **Climate Change and Security**, and **Energy and Security**. The centre will therefore have greater leverage and ability to zoom-in and provide in depth analysis of these NTS issues and propose

actionable policy recommendations to effectively address the range of NTS problems facing the Asia-Pacific region.

To conclude, let me express our sincere appreciation to our distinguished guests, friends and colleagues who have joined us today for the official launch of the Centre for NTS Studies. A special thanks to John Fitzgerald of the Ford Foundation for coming to this occasion. We are grateful to the Foundation for the generous support it has given to the development of the RSIS NTS programme and to the NTS-Asia Consortium. Our thanks also to the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada for providing support to our research fellowship scheme for Cambodian scholars which will commence soon.

Many thanks to Dr Surin Pitsuwan, Secretary General of ASEAN for agreeing to deliver today's keynote address, as he had done last year during the inaugural launch of the Consortium of Non-Traditional Security Studies in Asia. Dr Pitsuwan's experience as a prime advocate of Human Security is without a doubt invaluable to the study of Non-Traditional Security and we are very pleased to have him with us today.

Finally, I would like to also thank the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources of Singapore, Yaacob Ibrahim, who has taken time out from his busy schedule to give us the opening address and officially launch the RSIS Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies.

It now gives me great pleasure to invite Minister Yaacob to deliver his opening address and formally launch the Centre.

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