Welcome Address by Mr. S. Chandra Das, Chairman of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies Fund Raising Committee, at the Launch of the RSIS Endowment Fund on 31 March 2008

Your Excellency, Mr S R Nathan, President of the Republic of Singapore, Chancellor of NTU and Patron of the NTU Endowment Fund;

Mr Teo Chee Hean, Minister for Defence;

Mr Gan Kim Yong, Minister of State for Education;

Mr Koh Boon Hwee, Chairman, NTU Board of Trustees;

Dr Su Guaning, President, Nanyang Technological University;

Dr Andrew Chew, Chairman, RSIS Board of Governors;

Ambassador Barry Desker, Dean of RSIS;

Members of the RSIS Fund Raising Committee;

Benefactors;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you one and all for your kind presence this evening to witness the launch of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies Endowment Fund. In particular, I would like to thank President S R Nathan for presiding at this ceremony as Chancellor of Nanyang Technological University and as Patron of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies Endowment Fund.
RSIS was established on 1 January 2007. Before this, it was known as the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies or IDSS in short. The upgrading and renaming of IDSS into a professional graduate school was accompanied by the establishment of the RSIS Endowment Fund.

When I was asked to chair the fund raising committee in October 2006, I felt a sense of déjà vu for I recalled that eight years earlier, I was also asked to chair a committee to raise funds for the S. Rajaratnam Professorship in Strategic Studies at IDSS. We raised about $5.6 million (including a matching grant from the Government) which is why the IDSS and later the RSIS was able to benefit from the teaching and research services of visiting luminaries in the field of strategic studies.

When I began work to raise funds for the new School, it was with some trepidation that I did so for the target was to establish an endowment of $40 million. I was also aware of the fact that I would have to tax – and I don’t mean this as a pun – the generosity of the same people who had supported numerous fund raising campaigns over the years, including those that I myself spearheaded. Many of you here were the same people who contributed generously to our appeals. From the bottom of my heart, I thank all of you here sincerely.

My sincere thanks also go to the hundreds of other donors who should be here but are not because of logistical and space constraints. While most of the donations received were
contributions from organisations and individuals, there were some that came from fund-raising activities organised by junior colleges and schools. I should also highlight that of the $40 million raised, more than one-third of it, i.e., $14.5 million, were matching grants from the Government, a fact that we gratefully acknowledge.

Like the S. Rajaratnam Professorship in Strategic Studies Endowment Fund, the RSIS Endowment Fund will remain in perpetuity. Only the income from the Endowment will be used, and this will be for the purpose of engaging world-class faculty and research scholars for the School and to provide scholarships to talented students.

My brief remarks would be incomplete without some comment about the committee that I worked with. The members gave me very enthusiastic support. This and the many hours that they put in to raise funds for the RSIS Endowment Fund were very heartening. If not for them, we could not have raised $40 million within the space of a year. My thanks go to every member of the committee.

I would also like to thank the three advisors to the fund raising committee, namely, Mr. Wong Kan Seng, Mr. S. Dhanabalan, and Mr. Othman Wok, for their guidance and support.

Finally, I would like to thank the President, Mr. S R Nathan, for his generous personal donation and for his invaluable advice and guidance to me and my committee.