

**PM's Video Message at the Launch of the IPI-RSIS Report on "Small States
and the Future of Multilateralism", 19 Sep 2024
(Recorded on 16 Sep 2024)**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Let me start by conveying my greetings to the President of the 79th Session of the UN General Assembly, His Excellency Philemon Yang; and UN Secretary-General, His Excellency Antonio Guterres, whom I had the pleasure of welcoming to Singapore recently.
2. Today, we launched the report on "Small States and the Future of Multilateralism" – jointly prepared by the International Peace Institute, and Singapore's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.
3. This report captures the priorities and challenges for the UN and the multilateral system, as seen from the perspective of small states.
4. For small states, a strong and effective multilateral system based on international law is not just a necessity; it is existential.
 - a. Without such a rules-based order that treats countries equally, the risks for small states increase exponentially.
 - b. We risk descending into a world governed by the law of the jungle, where power dictates justice, and might become right.
 - c. This would undermine the very principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence which small states rely on to safeguard our interests.

5. Unfortunately, the world is becoming a more dangerous place for small states.
 - a. Geopolitical tensions are rising. The major powers of the world are competing for dominance and influence. Amidst this great power rivalry, we already see an increase in protectionism and unilateral tendencies.
 - b. If these trends continue, they will create a more precarious environment for small states. We will be under growing pressure to take sides; we will be more vulnerable to economic coercion, political interference and even security threats.

6. That's why it's so important for small states to stand together – to redouble efforts to reinforce the multilateral system, and to defend the principles of international law.

7. We may be small. But there is much we can do together. Small states are not without agency. We are not passive bystanders. What we lack in size, we can make up for with agility, resourcefulness and cooperation. By working together, we can make our collective voices heard and amplify our influence. We can influence the development of rules and norms for global issues like climate change and Artificial Intelligence, and ensure that our interests are taken into account.

8. It is for this reason that Singapore embarked on this project – to put together a report that examines how small states can increase our autonomy and agency in an ever-changing global landscape.

9. This report is a call for greater partnership, not only among small states but also with all UN members. Ultimately, all nations face the same challenge and objective, of enhancing international cooperation to improve the lives of their citizens.

10. By working together, we can address global challenges more effectively; we can ensure a global system that is fit for purpose in this changing world – one that upholds the

rights and interests of all countries, no matter their size. This is the key to creating a safer, more stable, and more prosperous future for all. You can be assured of Singapore's strong and steadfast support in this critical endeavour.

11. On that note, I hope all of you find the report useful and wish you a productive discussion.