

SPEECH BY MS GRACE FU, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, AT “AN EVENING WITH SUNBURST YOUTH CAMP” AT THE RELC HOTEL AUDITORIUM ON FRIDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2009, AT 5 PM

Your Excellencies

Prof Leo Tan, Chairman, Singapore Technologies
Endowment Programme (STEP)

Distinguished guests

Sunburst Youth Camp participants

National Archives of Singapore
Good evening.

1. I am delighted to be here this evening to share in the grand finale of the Sunburst Youth Camp (SYC).

2. The SYC provides a platform for youth from across Asia to learn about each other's countries and cultures, as well as to be ambassadors of their own countries. The first SYC was held in 1998. It started with only seven countries being represented. Over the twelve years, the SYC has grown. Today, 13 countries are represented, including all ten ASEAN countries, China, India and Kazakhstan. In total, some 1,400 youths have benefited from this cross-cultural camp.

3. The SYC would have benefited you in 3 ways. It would have taught you (1) about yourself, (2) about your friends and their countries, and (3) about overcoming limitations to succeed.

4. First, about yourself. The SYC has designed a rigorous programme to stretch you physically, mentally and emotionally over this past week. I see before me many happy, smiling and enthusiastic faces. To me this is

proof that in spite of the rigor of the camp, you have discovered that you have the physical, mental and emotional strengths to complete all the tasks given to you. I understand from reliable sources that you have spent many hours, some late into the night, to practise for your performances tonight. I am certain that when you look back later on the past one week, you would have discovered a lot more about yourself, your strengths, weaknesses, talents and found confidence in yourself.

5. Next, about your friends and their countries. I am sure most of you had some worries before the Camp on whether you would be able to understand and relate to the participants from 12 other countries. Your educational journey in understanding each other started the moment you were selected for the Camp. By this evening, after relating, working, sharing and living with each other for one week, you must have realised that youths across Asia share the same dreams, hopes, aspirations and worries,

and that the best way to understand each other is to keep an open mind and learn to accept each others' limitations, similarities and differences.

6. As the world becomes increasingly inter-connected, our youths must develop a global outlook. They should develop a deeper appreciation of different cultures and ways of life, and to learn skills to plug into the globalised world we live in today. Through initiatives such as overseas community projects and school immersion programmes, young people are gaining exposure to the world. In Singapore, our schools conduct exchange programmes with overseas schools, so that our students

have the opportunity to interact with students from other countries. The SYC is unique in that we bring people from many parts of the world to Singapore – so not only do you get to know Singapore and Singaporeans, you get to know people from many other countries. This global outlook and

understanding will be very helpful in your education and personal development.

7. Thirdly, about overcoming limitations and succeeding in life. All of us are blessed with different talents, skills and resources. This does not mean that if you started off with less than your friends, you cannot succeed in life.

8. The various activities of SYC over this week have also shown you how with limited resources, it is possible to overcome challenges, attain success and share the benefits of these successes with society. I understand that you have visited the Marina Barrage, where you have learnt about how Singapore as a country has overcome the lack of natural resources by adopting technology and innovative solutions.

9. Yesterday, you have heard how Prof Lim Kah Leong of Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School overcame

personal and social limitations and succeeded in realising his dream of becoming a Professor and a Researcher. You can do the same.

10. We sincerely hope that the experience has been a rewarding and beneficial one to you, and that it may encourage some of you to return to Singapore whether to study, to work here or just to visit your new-found friends.

While the Camp has come to an end, I hope that you will continue to nurture the friendship that you have built with your fellow participants. Take time to reflect on what you have learnt. Seize whatever opportunities that come your way to develop yourself, and be courageous in pursuing your dreams. I wish you every success in your education

and in your journey of life.

11. Thank you.