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SPEECH BY DR OW CHIN HOCK,

MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS,

MAYOR OF TANJONG PAGAR CDC DISTRICT AND

MP FOR TANJONG PAGAR GRC AT THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF OLDER PERSONS '99 CARNIVAL ON
SUNDAY, 25 JULY 1999 AT 9-00 AM

AT LENG KEE COMMUNITY CENTRE

1 It is my pleasure to join you this morning for the International Year of
Older Persons '99 (IYOP) Carnival. I am happy to see so many of you here today,
especially the senior citizens, as this is an event organised with you in mind.

2 1999 has been designated by the United Nations as the International Year of
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Older Persons with the theme 'Towards A Society of All Ages'. The theme reflects the common desire to build an inclusive and integrated society that allows its members, regardless of age, to contribute to its well-being.

3 As you all know, Singapore has one of the fastest ageing populations in the world. Currently, about 7 per cent of our population is aged 65 years and above. By the year 2030, it would have increased to 18.4 per cent, which means that one in five Singaporeans will be aged 65 and above. As the population ages, the needs of our elderly will also change. These will include changes in terms of employment, financial security, health care, transport, community support and housing. In view of these challenges, an Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Aged has thus been formed in March 1999.

4 Senior citizens, with their wealth of experience and wisdom can still make significant contributions to their families and society. The community should be attuned to their needs and interests and create opportunities where they can contribute and make a difference.

5 Today's IYOP '99 Carnival is organised to encourage our elderly to remain physically and socially active and to foster community bonding. It is important that not only senior citizens but also their families have participated at the Carnival. The family members will understand more about the needs, interests and problems of the senior citizens better. Their participation is indeed active citizenship in action and a step towards building strong family ties - two important ideas of our Singapore 21 Vision.

6 Tanjong Pagar CDC District has a higher percentage of elderly (11.84%) as compared to the national average. In view of this, the elderly is thus one of the main target groups of the Tanjong Pagar Community Development Council (CDC). The CDC has been organising regular keep fit sessions, health screenings and educational talks on health issues to encourage our senior citizens to lead healthier lives. Through these activities, the CDC also hopes to promote interaction and bonding among the elderly.

7 The CDC has also jointly set up a Multi-Service Centre for the Elderly with the Home Nursing Foundation, Thye Hwa Kwan Moral Society and the Queenstown Grassroots Organisations (GROs). This is a one-stop service centre that offers the elderly maintenance and rehabilitative care as well as social and recreational activities.

8 As part of the Community Safety and Security Programme, our GROs will work with the Police and youth organisations such as NPCC of schools to organise activities on crime prevention and road safety for the elderly.

9 Through these events, we aim to help our elderly to age gracefully, remain actively involved in society, and contribute to their families and community for as long as they can. The continuing challenge for the CDC is to encourage our elderly to stay healthy and to provide opportunities that will enable them to make meaningful contributions, thereby remaining an integral part of the community in

their retirement years.

10 In closing, I would like to wish all our senior citizens good health and happiness.

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