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SPEECH BY RADM (NS) LUI TUCK YEW, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND THE ARTS, AT THE GREEN WAVE ENVIRONMENTAL CARE PROJECT FOR SCHOOLS AWARD PRESENTATION CEREMONY ON MONDAY, 19 JANUARY 2009, AT 9.50AM AT MARINA MANDARIN SINGAPORE

Mr P.K. Ong, Deputy President, Sembcorp Marine and Managing Director, Sembawang Shipyard

Students,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning,

Introduction

1 It gives me great pleasure to be here this morning at the award presentation ceremony of Sembawang Shipyard's Green Wave Environmental Care Competition.

Environmental education in schools

2 Like many cities around the world, Singapore faces challenges in protecting its environment. From global warming to rapid urbanisation and

consumer wastage, the issue of environmental sustainability has become a pressing concern for our society. It requires our whole-hearted attention and continuous effort. Everyone has a part to play to protect and preserve what we have.

3 In the formal school curriculum, environmental education is incorporated in subjects such as Social Studies, Science and Geography. Through discussions, hands-on activities and self reflection, students learn to appreciate the natural environment and about ways to protect it.

4 Outside the classroom, our schools are also actively engaging our students in environmental programmes and activities. As one of the key features of our Community Involvement Programme, students are encouraged to be part of the green effort through activities such as recycling and energy conservation programmes. Some schools even adopt parks and waterways.

5 A good example of our schools' efforts in heightening environmental-consciousness is Commonwealth Secondary School. As the Centre of

Excellence for Environmental Education, Commonwealth Secondary has embarked on various environmental education programmes, from the adoption of the mangrove boardwalk trail in the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, to learning journeys and environmental seminars. Recently, they have also constructed a wetland eco-water purification system. The school used plants like lotuses and cattails, along with micro-organisms and activated carbon in their outdoor ponds to recycle dirty water for watering plants and cleaning the school compound. This constructed treatment wetland allows their students to learn about and conduct experiments and research on water conservation and urban agriculture.

Enthusiasing and inspiring the young – the Green Wave Competition

6 Our partners have a crucial role to play in providing opportunities and setting examples for our students. I am glad that corporate organisations such as Sembawang Shipyard and its partners are taking a pro-active role by organising the annual Green Wave Environmental Care Competition for our students.

7 Green Wave is a useful platform for getting young Singaporeans involved in environmental conservation. Through the competition, students will gain an appreciation of the environmental challenges that Singapore and other countries face.

8 The competition also challenges students to come up with creative, out-of-the-box solutions. It seeks to motivate students to experiment with ideas and technologies to develop new ways to protect the environment. This ties in well with what we are working towards in education, as we want to nurture young Singaporeans to look beyond their textbooks and use their innovative ideas and abundant energies to create a better society. Competitions like Green Wave provide them with an opportunity to identify real life problems, work in teams, undertake research and come up with practical solutions.

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9 This is apparent in the team of four students from Hwa Chong Institution, who is this year's first prize winner for the JC/ITE category. Tapping on their creativity, perseverance and leadership qualities, these youths have helped the community to kick-start a series of environmentally-

friendly schemes. They launched a Green Station near Community Centres, where residents can exchange recyclables for cash vouchers, and went house to house teaching residents about the “Ten-minute mozzie wipeout” to combat dengue. The HCI team also launched the National Youth EnvirOlympics, which has made environmental protection ‘hip’ and ‘cool’ with the teenage crowd. In fact, their passion and enthusiasm is clearly spreading as they’ve managed to establish a youth committee of over 20 members and 1000 youth volunteers. This is an impressive achievement.

10 Even the young ones have shown maturity beyond their years when it comes to environmental conservation. For the young team from St Hilda’s Primary School, a walk around their school one day ended up sparking off a prize-winning idea. I’m told that after noticing that vending machines in school are switched on 24/7, these primary school pupils came up with the idea of building a solar-powered vending machine. It’s a simple yet significant idea that reduces our carbon footprint without sacrificing life’s little conveniences.

Building a green future together

11 It is heartening to see the increasing level of participation from the schools and students over the years. From 117 project entries in 2003 to the recent 260 entries, the 2008 competition also saw a participation of close to 1,000 students from all levels. The favourable feedback from the judges on the standards and quality of this year's entries is also encouraging.

12 The enthusiasm and passion shown by the students in sharing their creative green ideas bodes well for the long-term development of Singapore in environment care and protection. I applaud these students for challenging assumptions and looking for new ways to solve real environmental problems in our society. I hope schools will also continue to offer support and encouragement to all students in their environmental endeavours.

13 Finally, I would like to congratulate the award winners and all participants. Keep up the good work, as I am sure your green ideas and efforts, be they small or big, will make a difference to our environment.

14 Thank you.

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