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Ms Tan Puay Hoon, President, Restroom Association (Singapore)

Distinguished Guests

Award Recipients

Ladies and Gentlemen

1 A very good morning to everyone. I am delighted to join all of you today at the Let's Observe Ourselves Awards Ceremony, or, appropriately called, the LOO Awards Ceremony. Today marks the sixth instalment of the LOO Awards which the RAS has initiated in 2009. These awards recognise the efforts put in by individuals and organisations that have played active roles to uplift the standard of restroom cleanliness in Singapore and have become a key part of the landscape in this sector.

### **World Toilet Day**

2 Today, as we have already been reminded, is World Toilet Day, which we have just commemorated. We did that because it is useful for us to reflect on the many countries in the world that still have not overcome the basic challenge of providing their people with adequate sanitation facilities, which are needed for public health and a dignified way of life. Singapore is blessed to have embarked on modernising its sanitation infrastructure as a priority at its independence, and managed to sewer all homes by 1997. To promote our belief in sanitation for all, we initiated and successfully passed a resolution at the United Nations General Assembly last year to designate today, every year, as World Toilet Day.

3 One of the strong motivations for this is because the Millennium Development Goals, which the UN had put in place for some time, had sanitation as one of the goals. But this was the goal that has had at the least progress for the last 10 years. That is the background why Singapore felt that we needed to make a statement on this.

### **Efforts to promote restroom cleanliness and user experience**

4 While adequate sanitation is no longer an issue for Singapore, we would all agree that more can still be done to make our own restrooms cleaner and more user-friendly. Toilet conditions are not necessarily just a function of how clean the toilets are, but also have to do with design and user experience. A public restroom should be well-designed, not only to make it easy to clean, but also to ensure that users have as pleasant an experience as possible. This is very important as it affects the attitude and behaviour of users who also have a part to play in helping to maintain toilet cleanliness.

5 I am happy that RAS has been active in engaging building owners and management, business operators, cleaning service providers and cleaning attendants to improve the design and maintenance of our public restrooms. In tandem with NEA's revised Code of Practice on Environmental Health to enable public washrooms to be better designed and outfitted with better infrastructure, which were announced at last year's World Toilet Day, RAS also launched the third edition of their publication entitled "A Guide to Better

Public Toilet Design and Maintenance”.

6 This morning, Puay Hoon has announced other initiatives, and I am happy that she has continued to do all these changes. I think many of us would have noticed some of the features that are in the new Code of Practice, as well as in the guide that RAS has produced. Many of us would have noticed that many of these features have been installed in the newer or refurbished restrooms all over Singapore, and I believe the momentum will continue to grow.

7 We must also remember that clean restrooms are also the result of hard and dedicated cleaning by our underappreciated restroom cleaners. Last year, NEA and its industry partners developed a pictorial guide for cleaners to help reinforce skills for cleaning procedures and use of appropriate equipment, as well as the safety measures to abide by. Since 2012, the RAS has been conducting on-the-job training for more than 150 cleaning attendants. Later on, the RAS will be signing a MOU with the Centre for Competency-Based Learning and Development (CBLD). With this partnership, cleaning attendants undergoing hands-on training by RAS will also be concurrently assessed by the CBLD for Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ).

### **LOO Awards Winners**

8 I am pleased to be presenting this year’s LOO Awards to the individuals and organisations which have successfully uplifted the standard of public toilets in their premises. Many have done so by making special efforts to engage their fellow users on a topic which may not be seen as the most ‘cool’ or the most convenient topic to discuss. Let me just take a few moments to cite some of the notable recipients.

9 Unison Construction is a construction firm that has garnered several awards [\[1\]](#) for its array of projects such as condominiums, HDB flats, landed properties and industrial projects. It first participated in the RAS’s Happy Toilet Programme, which certifies clean toilets, when it was involved in a project last year led by City Developments Limited (CDL), which was itself already a firm supporter of the programme. Unison Construction went on after that to make a commitment to have all site toilets raised to the standards of RAS’s “Happy Toilet”. I was told that they engaged RAS to conduct educational talks and training for their workers and supervisors on site, and that their workers are now consciously putting what they learnt into practice. For example, they would proactively wash their soiled boots before entering toilets. Not only that, Unison has also made significant efforts to improve their users’ experience by providing decorative plants, modesty boards between urinals, as well as playing soothing music in these toilets!

10 ITE College East, where we are at today, has been running an on-going campaign named “Positive Action for the Care of Toilets” (+ACT) with RAS since 2011. Student ambassadors are appointed to promote ownership of restroom cleanliness within their campus. I was told that students have witnessed much improvement in the cleanliness of their toilets over the years, such as seeing less toilet paper indiscriminately strewn on the floors. I am also heartened to learn that for the first time this year, the student

ambassadors actually conducted interactive educational games about toilet etiquette messages on their own initiative.

11 I am also very happy to hear that our young ones are doing their part as well. With encouragement from their teachers, students from Unity Primary School spearheaded a 'No-Cleaners Day' earlier this year to appreciate the efforts of the cleaning attendants in their school. That day, the children took on the task of cleaning areas, including toilets, normally assigned to the attendants, and even organised a tribute lunch for them held during the school's assembly period.

12 Let me also mention three cleaners being recognised today as individuals who have tirelessly given their utmost to what is often an unrecognised and thankless task. Ms Girija Sasiprabha and Ms Gowri Perumal have worked conscientiously for at least four years to maintain 5-star Happy Toilets that are used by patients of the Institute of Mental Health, which is an environment that can be understandably challenging. Madam Koh Tee Hong, who has been working in here in ITE College East for four years, not only volunteered to take on the extra responsibility of cleaning toilets, which were not under her charge - she also went the extra mile to clean every toilet three times a day even though she is only expected to clean them twice a day. All of you truly deserve this overdue recognition!

### **Towards a more active and gracious community**

13 About two weeks ago, PM Lee Hsien Loong launched the revised Sustainable Singapore Blueprint. This is our collective vision towards a greener, cleaner and more healthy home for all Singaporeans. It is an important blueprint with bold plans and targets for 2030, borne out of efforts and ideas from the community as a whole. One of its main goals is for us to see ourselves and our children as the main beneficiaries of the blueprint's future outcomes, and to put in the necessary commitment to actively steward our environment and achieve our goal of becoming a gracious society.

14 We have definitely come a long way to ensure that everyone has access to functional toilets, wherever they may be. As we continue to develop and refresh all our buildings and urban spaces, I hope that we can all individually continue to participate in making the standard of all our public toilets a reflection of our collective vision for Singapore as a shared home that we can all be proud of. In doing so, not only can we enjoy all our public spaces better, we would also feel more secure about the health of our families and ourselves.

### **Conclusion**

15 Once again, I congratulate all the 17 LOO award recipients for your commendable efforts, and would also like to express my appreciation to the Restroom Association (Singapore) for continuing to organise this awards ceremony, amongst other efforts. Your consistent and unyielding efforts in raising awareness of and engaging others on restroom cleanliness and enhancing user experience has elevated the profile of an often

underappreciated issue and galvanised concrete action on this issue, both locally, and also near our shores and worldwide.

16 Let us continue to work together to create a more liveable and sustainable Singapore, and keep Singapore a healthy and clean place in which to live, work and play.

17 Thank you very much.

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[1] Including the ISO 9001, ISO 14001, WSH bizSAFE Star and BCA Green and Gracious Builder awards.

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