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**SPEECH BY DR AHMAD MATTAR, MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AT THE
OPENING CEREMONY OF THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON
WASTE MINIMIZATION AND RECYCLING ORGANISED BY THE
GERMANY-SINGAPORE ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY AGENCY
ON 19 MAY 1992 AT 9.30 AM AT THE NOVOTEL ORCHID SINGAPORE**

1. Last November, Singapore was honoured with the visit of Prof Dr Klaus Toepfer, the German Federal Minister of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU). During the visit, Prof Dr Toepfer and I exchanged views on a number of environmental issues. Among other things, we were pleased with the progress made by the international community and other regional environmental bodies towards improving the global environment. While we looked forward to a successful Earth Summit, Prof Dr Toepfer and I were aware that a few obstacles still remain in the way of international efforts to address environmental problems.

2. Both of us were keen to initiate joint activities between Germany and Singapore to pave the way for greater co-operation on the environment in the Asia-Pacific region. The Germany-Singapore Environmental Technology Agency (GSETA) was established to facilitate this process. Through the GSETA, Singapore and Germany will work closely together to combine technological expertise and experiences in the two countries and to use them to serve the environmental needs of the region. The GSETA will serve as Germany's regional centre in rendering technical assistance, from both governmental and non-governmental sources, to countries in Asia-Pacific.

3. This morning, I am especially pleased to see the fruit of our labour become a reality. The Asia-Pacific Workshop on Waste Minimization and Recycling is the inaugural activity of the GSETA. It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to this epochal event. It is through sharing that we learn. I hope that you will take this opportunity to share your experiences and to learn from each other.

4. All of us are familiar with the idea of solving environmental problems only after they have become problems. When they occur, we usually resort to one of the many "end-of-the-pipe" technologies designed to mitigate the adverse environmental impacts to air, water and land. Thereafter, it is business as usual. Sadly, we forget that we would have less need for these often costly "end-of-the-pipe" solutions if we reduce the amount of waste discharges at source. Less waste also means a better and more efficient use of the Earth's resources. It makes good economic and environmental sense for everybody, from corporate to private entities, to consider waste minimization and recycling as a solution to environmental problems.

5. I am aware that in some of the countries represented here today, waste minimization and recycling is a day-to-day affair for the populace, even though the main consideration for doing so may not be entirely for the environment. The challenge for these countries is in the retention of this "waste-less" ethics as the economic well-being of their people improves.

6. In Singapore, we have forgotten our austere days. Our people are now having to be re-educated to "waste-less". With economic growth and prosperity, Singaporeans have increasingly adopted a "throwaway" mentality. We will have to change this environmentally-damaging attitude.

7. We have recently campaigned at encouraging people to separate their wastes for recycling. We are also encouraging them to use products made from recycled materials. To assist the consumers in making good choices, there will be a Green Labelling Scheme to help them identify those products that are environmentally friendly. To start with, the Green Labelling Scheme in Singapore will be introduced for five product categories. They are office automation paper, printing paper, hygiene paper, stationery paper and Carbon-Zinc battery. A "GreenLabel" will be awarded to products which conform to the qualifying criteria formulated by our Ministry of the Environment for each of the product categories. The "GreenLabel", which is a special leaf-shaped logo, will be displayed on the products to assist consumer choice.

8. We will introduce many more product categories under the Green Labelling Scheme in the coming months. In this respect, we welcome suggestions from members of the public and the business sector for other product categories to be included and their qualifying criteria. Some of you taking part in this Workshop have acquired a wealth of experience and knowledge on the subject of labelling in your own countries. I hope that you will share with us your experience before you return home. We have a lot to learn from you.

9. On behalf of the GSETA, I would like to thank the Governments of Singapore and Germany for their generous and enthusiastic support for the Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on Waste Minimization and Recycling. I thank you all for participating in the Workshop and I sincerely hope that you will continue to support the efforts of the GSETA. The co-operation between developed and developing countries is crucial to the protection of the global environment. The GSETA will be one of the ways that this co-operation can be forged.

10. On this note, it is now my pleasure to declare open the Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on Waste Minimization and Recycling.

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