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SPEECH BY DR ALINE WONG, SENIOR MINISTER OF

STATE FOR EDUCATION, AT THE SINGAPORE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY'S DONATION DRAW 1999, ON  
SATURDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 99, AT

2.30PM, TIONG BAHRU PLAZA

Good afternoon.

# National Archives of Singapore

It is my pleasure to accept the Children's Society's invitation to be the  
Guest of Honour for their Donation Draw today.

2 The last two years have been a challenging period for most Singaporeans.  
Some households went through job loss and financial difficulties as a result of the  
economic crisis. The responsibilities of welfare organisations increased  
substantially in order to provide adequate care and services to their beneficiaries.

3 The economic downturn has also affected fund-raising efforts undertaken by  
welfare organisations. Some experienced a dip in the funds raised, as workers faced  
possible pay freezes, retrenchments and no bonuses.

4 The young today are our leaders of tomorrow. We must give each an equal opportunity in life. We must, time and again, check ourselves and spare a thought for the disadvantaged.

5 Remembering those in need will help us to shape our society into a civil and caring one. By contributing our time and effort, a special bond is formed with the needy. It is this bonding that will help the disadvantaged gain their foothold in life, boost their self-esteem and confidence. This is particularly important for children to grow up and to grow out of their disadvantaged background.

6 One of the youth outreach programmes initiated by the Children's Society called "Project Cabin" is aimed at youths-at-risk. Since its inception in 1994, the shift in focus from youths-at-risk to preventive/developmental work with youths has been apparent. "Project Cabin" therefore aims to develop youths' social skills, broaden their knowledge base and build leadership skills. There are currently six cabins in six Secondary schools. The project will be expanded to three more schools next year and come 2005, there will be 21 more cabins to benefit youths.

7 I am pleased to learn that the project has won the trust of school teachers, care givers and especially the students themselves. The Education Ministry supports this programme. We hope to see more schools adopt the programme as a means to help students better their grades and build up their character as they go through adolescence.

8 The Children's Society also manages a hotline for children. "Tinkle Friend" was started in 1994 and since then has provided lonely latchkey children a friendly and supportive listener to deal with their feelings of fear, loneliness and anxiety.

9 Next year, I understand the Children's Society is planning to introduce more children and youth preventive and developmental programmes, including a drop-in centre called CyberHUT. The centre will provide opportunity for disadvantaged youths to improve their computer skills as well as to interact with their peers and youth workers after school hours.

10 With the economic outlook presently being more optimistic, we look forward to a brighter year as we enter the new millennium, which holds new hope for all of us, including the disadvantaged in our midst.

11 I congratulate the Children's Society on its work for the disadvantaged. They have come a long way since 1952 and I am sure they will continue to stay relevant to the people of Singapore in the next millennium.

12 I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate in advance, all the winners of this year's Donation Draw!

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Thank you.

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