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Subject: [EMBARGOED] Speech by Mr Abdullah Tarmugi, 29 June 2000, 7 pm

Singapore Government

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**SPEECH BY MR ABDULLAH TARMUGI MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT AND SPORTS AT THE LAUNCH OF VOLUNTEERS
2000, THURSDAY, 29 JUNE 2000, 7 PM, AMARA BALLROOM, LEVEL 3,
AMARA HOTEL**

Good Evening **National Archives of Singapore**

Dr Robert Loh, President, National Council of Social Service

Mr Gerard Ee, Chairman, National Volunteer Centre

Mr Eric Teng, Chairman, Volunteer Action for Social Service

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to be here this evening for the launch of Volunteers 2000. The campaign is an annual event to promote awareness of volunteerism in Singapore. This year's launch is significant as it is jointly organised by the National Council of Social Service and the newly set-up National Volunteer Centre (NVC) which will be officially opened by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong next week.

2 With the NCSS and NVC working together, there will be more co-ordinated and systematic efforts to enhance volunteerism across all sectors in Singapore, and not just in social services.

3 The establishment of the NVC signals a new approach in the development of the volunteer movement in this country. Often, volunteerism is synonymous with the social service sector. However, in line with our Singapore 21 vision, a vibrant people sector can play a crucial role in invigorating and bonding the community and providing active citizenship. We would therefore need to promote volunteerism to a realm beyond the social services, to include people sector organisations such as the community, arts, heritage, environment and other organisations.

4 The NVC serves as a first-stop centre on volunteer opportunities. It will develop and implement strategies to make volunteerism the buzzword across the various sectors. The challenge is for NVC to cast the net far and wide to reach out to people of different age groups and interests. How do we make volunteering attractive, trendy and enriching? How do we compete against the many other attractions that vie for people's time and attention? NVC will need to be creative and persuasive.

5 For the social service sector, NVC has a strategic partner in the Volunteer Action and Development Centre of NCSS. For 17 years, the VADC was synonymous with the promotion of volunteerism in Singapore. The Centre which has since been renamed the Volunteer Action for Social Service or VASS, will continue to be the volunteer arm of NCSS. This new name reflects its more focused role. While the NVC promotes volunteerism across the various sectors, VASS will lead initiatives to enhance social service volunteerism.

6 I am pleased to note that VASS has identified volunteer management for special attention. Good volunteer management is indeed important. We must begin to view volunteers as having a stake in the organisations or agencies they

serve.

7 Past studies by my Ministry have shown that volunteers were more likely to stay on if the agency showed they cared for them – by training them, listening to them and giving feedback on their performance. This is why volunteer management must be complemented by proper training and development to ensure that volunteers are equipped to serve, not just with heart and passion, but also with the necessary skills and competence.

8 I would certainly encourage VASS to put in place effective volunteer management practices and policies, along with training programmes aimed at imparting specific skills and knowledge for the social service sector. By taking volunteers on board as partners in service to the community, we are better able to nurture and sustain their participation, and therefore enhance social service planning and delivery.

10 With the combined efforts of NVC and NCSS, through the Volunteer Action for Social Service, the volunteer movement in Singapore should make a quantum leap in presence and effectiveness. The challenge for all of us is to foster an environment for volunteerism to be a way of life in Singapore.

11 The launch of Volunteers 2000 adopts the theme Volunteering Offers You A Great Experience or V O Y A G E. This theme is reflected by the varied activities organised. The message inherent in this theme is that whatever one's interest, ability or inclination, there are always suitable opportunities that could prove to be fulfilling and challenging to the volunteer. The term V-O-Y-A-G-E also means that volunteering should not be a one-off experience but a journey of personal growth and discovery.

12 I am also encouraged by today's launch of the publication "Portraits of Care," a project by the National Council of Social Service and TRANS Centre. The collection of stories celebrate the joys of volunteering. I commend NCSS and TRANS Centre, as well as all the volunteers involved, for going the extra mile to make the stories come alive. I hope this meaningful sharing of personal experiences will inspire many more to come forward and take up the challenge of volunteering.

13 It now leaves me to wish all of you an enriching journey in volunteering and in paving the way for a more gracious and caring society in Singapore.