

Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good evening to all of you. I hope you will enjoy our revamped Sustainable Singapore Gallery (SSG), which tells the story of Singapore's sustainability journey.

Our Sustainability Story

2 Inside the Gallery, you will see a little porcelain figurine of a man, his grandson, and their dog out on a fishing trip. The figurine was presented to Dutch economist Dr Albert Winsemius after he lost a wager that the Singapore River could once again sustain life. Dr Winsemius was Chief Economic Advisor to the Singapore Government, and knew Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew well. They agreed on many things and we implemented most of Dr Winsemius' recommendations. But when Dr Winsemius recommended covering up the polluted Singapore River to turn it into a sewer, Mr Lee Kuan Yew objected and instead promised Dr Winsemius that he would one day catch a fish in the Singapore River. During his final visit to Singapore in 1993, he did catch a "Garoupa" (Grouper), and said he was never happier to lose a wager.

3 The clean-up of the Singapore River took us a decade and cost \$300 million. The successful completion showed that despite the difficulties showed Singapore's determination to grow our economy whilst protecting our environment. Sustainable development is and has been the cornerstone of our policymaking since our independence. In my Ministry's Addenda to the President's Address last month, we made a commitment to continue building on this legacy of a sustainable Singapore, balancing environmental protection and economic growth.

Year of Climate Action

4 The opening of this Gallery in Singapore's Year of Climate Action could not be more timely. As part of our campaign to raise national awareness of climate change, we have launched a Climate Action Pledge for individuals and organisations to commit to taking climate action. Because, the government cannot tackle Climate Change alone. I'm therefore happy with the response thus far. Today, we have garnered close to 170,000 pledges. If you have not already taken the pledge, you can do so today at Zones A and F of the Gallery.

5 Beyond Government-led efforts, we are greatly encouraged to see that non-governmental organisations are taking concrete steps towards a sustainable Singapore. At the Climate Action Carnival downstairs, Singtel has brought along the ReCYCLE bins from their e-waste recycling programme — an important part of our plans to become a Zero Waste Nation. Earthlink NTU has a booth

showcasing their carbon footprint research project, which involved giving more than 200 NTU student volunteers a device to estimate their average carbon footprint. The data collected will be used to guide campaigns to reduce the students' carbon footprint.

6 Children from Sunflower Preschool at Punggol Field Walk have been working with Coral RC to use solar panels to generate electricity to run fountains and sprinklers, and build ponds and fountains using recycled materials. These are commendable efforts to inculcate environmentally-friendly habits in the young, so that they grow up to become environmental advocates.

7 But no country can mitigate climate change alone. Singapore is actively contributing to international climate change negotiations, and regional and global efforts on sustainable development. In July, we will be holding the Singapore International Water Week, CleanEnviro Summit Singapore, World Cities Summit, and the Partners for the Environment forum, to drive conversations on sustainable development. As ASEAN Chair, Singapore will host a Special ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Climate Action and an expanded meeting to bring together ASEAN, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, the UNFCCC COP current President and President-designate Fiji and Poland and the UNFCCC Executive Secretary. These meetings will enable our region to demonstrate commitment to the Paris Agreement. Singapore is also undertaking our first Voluntary National Review of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This is an opportunity for Singapore to learn from and collaborate with other countries in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Conclusion

8 The SSG is situated here in the Marina Barrage, an iconic feature of Singapore's sustainability story. The Barrage celebrates its 10th anniversary this year. To celebrate this milestone, PUB has planned a series of activities that will culminate in a three-day carnival in the last week of October. We hope to see you here again.

9 To conclude, I hope that the SSG will generate conversations and ideas on sustainability, and inspire visitors to make sustainable choices in their lifestyles. Just as our past decisions gave us the clean environment we enjoy today, our decisions today will affect the future living environment of our children and their children. Let us work together keep Singapore a sustainable and vibrant home. Thank you.