

Mr Seah Kian Peng: To ask the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources (a) how are Singapore's efforts to manage this year's climate change proceeding; (b) whether such efforts are sufficient in light of the forecast by the Climate Prediction Centre of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of a 70% chance that El Nino will develop during end-2018; and (c) what countermeasures will Singapore adopt should El Nino develop.

Answer:

Climate change poses existential challenges for Singapore as an island city-state. In 2016, we published our Climate Action Plan which outlines Singapore's long-term strategy to mitigate and adapt to climate change. We continue to build on these plans.

2 This year, we announced the introduction of a carbon tax which will take effect from 2019. This tax will incentivise emissions reduction across the economy and encourage our companies to adopt more energy efficient practices as we transition to a low-carbon future.

3 We have also made progress in adapting Singapore to the potential impacts of climate change. In June, we opened Singapore's third desalination plant in Tuas, and two more are currently under development. These weather-resilient sources will contribute to our water resilience as we continue to diversify our water supply. To prepare for warmer temperatures, agencies have put in place precautionary guidelines for groups that are at higher risk of heat injury, such as outdoor workers. Across government, agencies will continue to take steps to build a carbon-efficient and climate-resilient Singapore.

4 But climate action cannot be the sole undertaking of the government. Everyone must participate in this effort. This is why we have designated 2018 as the Year of Climate Action, to raise our national consciousness of climate change and galvanise ground-up action for a sustainable Singapore. So far, more than 250,000 individuals, organisations, and educational institutions have made Climate Action pledges. We are encouraged by their commitment and hope this momentum continues beyond 2018.

5 The Meteorological Service Singapore (MSS) assesses that there is a 60-70 per cent chance of a weak El Niño developing late in the year. Should the El Niño occur, it is not likely to have a significant impact on rainfall patterns in Singapore and the nearby region, due to its expected weak intensity and late development during the year-end rainy season. We do not expect a repeat of the strong El Niño event experienced in 2015/2016, which was one of the strongest in recent history and led to significantly reduced rainfall in Singapore. The MSS will continue to monitor developments and provide relevant alerts to the public and relevant agencies.