

Ms Margaret Heng, Executive Director of the Singapore Hotel Association,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to join you this afternoon.

Introduction

1 In recent years, hotels around the world have been increasingly adopting sustainable practices – from improved food waste reduction to reducing reliance on single-use plastics. And there are compelling reasons to do so.

2 According to the 2018 Sustainable Travel Report by Booking.com – a global travel e-commerce company – 68% of 12,000 survey respondents from 12 countries expressed their preference for eco-friendly accommodation. In fact, 67% were willing to spend more on their travels to reduce the negative impact on the environment.

3 In “The Business Case for Reducing Food Loss and Waste” report published by Champions 12.3 in March 2017, where 1,200 businesses in food manufacturing, food retail, hospitality and food service across 17 countries were analysed, the median financial benefit-cost ratio was reported to be 14:1. This means that for every dollar invested in food and waste reduction efforts, companies can realise \$14 in financial benefits.

4 But ultimately, the need for sustainable development goes beyond dollars and cents, catering to environmentally-conscious consumers, or building a positive image for your brand. It is about protecting the environment we live in, to ensure that it continues to thrive in future.

5 Singapore has a vision of becoming a Zero Waste Nation, under the Sustainable Singapore Blueprint. For this vision to become reality, every individual needs to consciously reduce, reuse and recycle. We must also endeavour to build a circular economy, by minimising waste generation and maximising the value and resources that are extracted from key waste streams.

6 Last year, the recycling rate for hotels was 8.5%, up from 5.5% in 2016. On average, a hotel room generated 3.7 kg of waste daily, of which only 0.32 kg was recycled while the rest was discarded. There is still much potential for improvement. As a major pillar of our tourism industry, hotels must lead by example in contributing to our vision of a Zero Waste Nation.

3R Awards for Hotels 2018

7 To promote and recognise waste minimisation and recycling efforts within the industry, the National Environment Agency and the Singapore Hotel Association introduced the 3R Programme for Hotels in 2011, and the biennial 3R Awards in 2014.

8 Today, we are pleased to recognise 14 award winners which have made a positive impact in their sustainability journey, including three first-time recipients – Festive Hotel, Mandarin Orchard Singapore and Regent Singapore. We also want to acknowledge the 3R efforts of Mandarin Oriental Singapore, our Distinction Award recipient for the third consecutive time.

9 Mandarin Oriental implements its sustainability policy of responsibly managing environmental impact and social commitments, in exemplary fashion. The hotel has a digital library to provide guests with the option of electronic newspapers. Since the service was implemented, the demand for printed newspapers has fallen by over 60%. Writing materials, gym mats at the fitness centre, and the swimwear and backpacks on

sale are all made from recycled material. In addition, reusable glasses for drinks are provided at meeting rooms.

10 The hotel conducts annual waste audits to constantly improve measures to reduce, reuse or recycle their waste. Through the in-room directory, guests are encouraged to care for the environment by practising the 3Rs.

11 I am also heartened to note that all our winners have taken the Climate Action Pledge – thank you for your commitment. Fighting climate change requires the collective efforts of government, businesses, communities and individuals. If your hotel has not pledged yet, I urge you to do so now at www.climateaction.sg. To date, we have garnered more than 275,000 pledges with over 300 organisations taking a stand against climate change.

Food waste

12 One key area of concern is food waste. In 2017, Singapore generated about 809,800 tonnes of food waste. Half of this came from non-domestic sources including hotels, and only a small percentage of the food waste generated was recycled.

13 To support organisations in their food waste reduction efforts, NEA worked with the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority and industry stakeholders to develop a Food Waste Minimisation Guidebook for Food Retail Establishments which was launched at the last 3R Awards for Hotels. This guidebook contains information on how hotels can improve and sustain their food waste minimisation efforts, for example through food waste audits, inventory management, redistributing excess food and recycling food waste.

14 The NEA has also developed materials that hotel operators can use to educate hotel employees and guests on reducing food waste. I am happy to see that some hotels have already put up these materials at their premises to promote awareness on food waste reduction. I encourage more hotels to do so and also reference the food waste minimisation guidebook from NEA's website.

15 Increasingly, F&B premises are treating their food waste using on-site food waste digesters. The benefits are aplenty. At Our Tampines Hub (OTH), the amount of waste disposed of has been reduced by two-thirds after digesters were installed. As a result, OTH is saving \$40,000 annually from needing fewer waste disposal trucks. The digester also converts the food waste into non-potable water, liquid plant nutrients and organic fertiliser. The non-potable water is used to wash the waste bins and the bin centre; the liquid nutrients are used to help grow vegetables and fruits at its rooftop community garden, while the fertiliser is distributed to residents. By managing food waste effectively, pest issues are also minimised. I urge all hotel operators to consider on-site food waste treatment systems, if you haven't already done so. Grants are available from NEA's 3R Fund should you need help to get started on the system. Currently there are 24 food waste digester projects under the Fund, of which eight belong to hotels.

Concluding Remarks

16 I warmly congratulate Mandarin Oriental Singapore, and all 3R award winners. You exemplify some of the best green practices in the industry, and your collective efforts will go a long way to safeguard our environment for our future generations.

Thank you.