

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am happy to see many of us gathered here to mark another chapter in Singapore's efforts towards sustainable development. We have lined up an exciting programme here at Our Tampines Hub (OTH) this weekend. You can visit our partners' booths that showcase their innovations on reducing, reusing and recycling. There will be a tour later to see the wormery, eco-digesters and Eco garden. And we are privileged to have CEO and Founder of Miniwiz, Mr Arthur Huang, to share how his company innovates to design solutions for the circular economy, a concept you will hear a lot more of from today. I hope you will enjoy yourselves here this weekend and be inspired to take action.

### **2018 – A successful Year of Climate Action**

2. In 2018, we had a successful Year of Climate Action. Individuals, institutions and organisations stepped forward to take climate action. More than 340,000 of them pledged to reduce their carbon footprint. Collectively, we held more than 800 climate action related events across the 3P (People, Private, and Public) sectors – that's more than 2 events per day.

3. These efforts demonstrate our firm commitment to climate action and that we are doing this together. I am proud that the Year of Climate Action has shown that Singaporeans care, and has brought everyone closer together to take collective action against climate change.

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### **2019 to be the “Year Towards Zero Waste”**

4. That is a good start, but we must not stop here. Climate change will have a growing impact on our lives, more on our children and even more on our grandchildren. We need to continue with our efforts to address climate change. Various ministries are implementing measures to address climate change: building a comprehensive public transport network and increasing green energy alternatives to name a few. We also take Climate Action when we address issues around waste.

5. To build on the success of our Year of Climate Action, we will designate 2019 as the Year towards Zero Waste. The aim is to imbue a consciousness within Singaporeans on the need to treasure our precious resources and to do our part to protect the planet. We need a paradigm shift. We need to adopt a circular economy approach.

6. Let me explain. Traditionally, we use resources in a linear fashion. Take for instance, a can of sardines. We make the cans, fill them with sardines, eat what we are able and throw the can and leftovers away. But one key aspect of the circular economy approach is to turn trash into treasure by reusing and recycling our resources endlessly – the can and even the unfinished food. So that same metal can be collected and reused after processing, and the food waste turned into useable products.

7. Another key aspect of the circular economy is to produce and consume sustainably. The majority of the world's greenhouse gas emissions come from the production and consumption of goods. A Norwegian study puts this figure at more than 60 per cent. Recognising this as a critical area, world leaders included “Responsible Consumption and Production” among the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. That is why becoming a Zero Waste nation is a key pillar of climate action.

8. Adopting a circular economy approach and striving towards zero waste is not just environmentally sustainable. It will also bring new economic opportunities for our companies, and good jobs for Singaporeans. One example is Australian Fruit Juice, or AFJ. AFJ is a local manufacturer and supplier of fruit juices. They produce waste fruit peels as a result. Instead of throwing them away, AFJ partners UglyGood, an upcycling solutions provider, to process these fruit peels as ingredients for producing organic cleaning agents. In doing so, they turn trash into treasure, generating new economic value from something that would have been thrown away. They have also created new green jobs as skilled workers would be required to perform the conversion process.

**Building a Zero Waste Nation in everyday living**

9. A Zero Waste Nation may sound complex, but it is actually well grounded in our Asian culture. I recall my parents teaching me not to waste – don't waste food, don't waste electricity, don't waste water. Today, we teach our children the same. And this is what the Year Towards Zero Waste is about – where we consciously act to treasure our resources and protect our environment.

10. Similarly, the circular economy is all around us, including here at OTH. Every day, about 700kg of discarded food is sent to eco-digesters instead of waste bins. This is equivalent to 3,500 bowls of rice! These digesters convert the food waste to water which is used for washing, and fertiliser, which is distributed to Tampines residents for their gardens to grow food. Again, we turn food waste into something useful! There are other benefits. Since there is no food waste to be collected, OTH's general waste collector comes only once a day, instead of four times daily, reducing transport costs and emissions. Food waste segregation also means that recyclables in blue recycling bins are less likely to be contaminated. And, we all enjoy a clean, pest-free environment.

11. We have mobilised the community in Tampines to join this effort. I am proud that our residents at Tampines Greenlace have been diligently segregating their food waste at home, and bringing it down to a special bin on the ground floor, where the food waste is collected and sent to our OTH digesters. This pilot was supposed to last three months, but I am happy to announce that we will extend the project following positive feedback and requests from many residents to continue with it.

**A national consciousness for the environment as the foundation for the “Year Towards Zero Waste”**

12. The OTH and Tampines Greenlace projects show how everyone must do their part as we strive towards a Zero Waste nation. It can be as simple as bringing reusable bags to carry our shopping, or handing down used textbooks instead of throwing them away. Each of us can contribute to the environment in our own ways as we strive towards a Zero Waste Nation.

13. Every effort counts. Joined together, they are a powerful force for tackling the environmental challenges we face. Nature reminds us of this. Redwoods are among the world's tallest trees and they can be as tall as 100 metres – that's a 30 storey high building. But what's amazing about redwoods is not their height, but their roots. For such a tall tree the roots are actually not very deep. Instead, the roots of each redwood tree intertwine with that of another redwood. This is what gives the redwood trees collective strength to weather strong winds and storms – far greater than what an individual tree can withstand – even with deep roots. As we join together our individual efforts and forge a collective, national consciousness to care for our environment, we will likewise build the strength to overcome environmental challenges and build a sustainable Singapore. This will be a central theme in the Year Towards Zero Waste, and we will consult and co-create actively with the community.

14. I hope that our collective efforts will allow us to Save Semakau, our only off-shore landfill. Nas Daily showed Singapore and the world how impossible but beautiful Semakau is. But it will be completely filled by 2035 if we do nothing now. Let us take action to extend the lifespan of Semakau as part of our progress towards a Zero Waste Nation.

#### **Highlights in the Year Towards Zero Waste**

15. There are many things that we can all look forward to in this Year Towards Zero Waste. We will launch public consultations for our inaugural Zero Waste Masterplan to foster shared ownership. I warmly encourage everyone to participate as we chart this journey together.

16. We will also launch the #RecycleRight movement to mobilise all Singaporeans to recycle right – by keeping recyclables clean, dry and free from food contamination. Also look out for our new video featuring today's emcee and our zero waste ambassador, Ms Denise Keller, after my speech.

17. The private and people sectors are our valuable partners in rallying Singaporeans in this Year Towards Zero Waste. We will start a 'Towards Zero Waste Grant' to support ground-up projects relating to zero waste. If you need inspiration, I encourage you to visit our partners' booths later.

### **Conclusion**

18. I believe that if we adopt the circular economy approach and do it right, we will conserve resources, preserve our environment and create new economic opportunities.

19. The products of the circular economy are not only profitable, but beautiful as well. Many of us know Tzu Chi has successfully engaged the community in practising not just 3, but 5Rs – reduce, reuse, recycle, repair and recover. But do you know that they are also converting used PET bottles into comfortable dry-fit shirts?

20. There is also Miniwiz. They produce durable furniture using only recycled materials. I can personally testify to this as I have one set of tables and chairs designed by Arthur himself just outside my office.

21. I hope you are now all excited about the upcoming year. Do stay tuned to our updates. Together, we can make Singapore a Zero Waste Nation.

22. I wish you an enjoyable time this weekend. Thank you.