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**SPEECH BY MR ONG TENG CHEONG, SECRETARY-GENERAL, NTUC AND
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, FOR THE INAUGURATION OF
NTUC CHILDCARE COOPERATIVE LTD ON 26TH APRIL 1992
AT MARINA MANDARIN AT 7.30 PM**

Following the 1969 Modernisation Seminar organised by NTUC, the cooperative movement became synonymous with the trade union movement.

2 Today, NTUC itself has set up 5 cooperatives - INCOME in 1970, COMFORT in 1971, Denticare in 1972, Fairprice (formerly Welcome) also in 1972 and NTUC Voice in 1991. Today, it gives me much pleasure to welcome yet another NTUC cooperative - NTUC Childcare Cooperative.

3 NTUC Childcare is certainly no stranger to Singaporeans. It was founded in 1977 when NTUC began taking over the running of childcare centres from the then Ministry of Social Affairs over a period of 2 years. In the '70s, as Singapore embarked on its industrialisation plan, we were faced by a severe labour shortage. NTUC decided that it would do its part to encourage more female participation in the workforce. NTUC began by making childcare services available and at affordable fees. Through the unions, NTUC has also been encouraging employers to set up childcare centres at workplaces. We have also helped to train childcare staff that was needed to meet the demand of the market.

5 As I look back over the past 15 years, I am amazed at how far we have progressed. In 1979, there were only 15 centres in Singapore, 11 were under NTUC. Today, there are almost 300 childcare centres providing a total of 20,000 childcare places. Of these 21 are set up at workplaces.

6 NTUC Childcare itself has 15 centres, with two more to be set up soon. It is still the single largest provider of childcare with 1,800 childcare places. NTUC Childcare has grown from providing custodial care to being a highly professional service for the care, development and education of young children. We have developed our skills over the years and is now a recognised training institution for childcare professionals, not only in Singapore, but also in the region. To provide support to companies that wish to set up workplace childcare, NTUC Childcare also runs a consultation and management service.

7 The success of NTUC Childcare is due to dedication of our staff to help the working parents - whether blue-collared, white-collared, workers or professionals - and their desire to develop each child to his fullest potential. Our success is also, in no small way, due to the strong support of the various organisations in helping NTUC Childcare to expand and upgrade all these years.

8 NTUC Childcare Services has come of age. It has grown and developed in size, and with maturity. In order to be able to do even better to respond to the needs of parents and to be more creative, resourceful and efficient in its operations, NTUC has decided to convert NTUC Childcare Service from a department of NTUC to a cooperative. I am confident that with this conversion, and under the able leadership of the Board of Trustees and Board of Directors, NTUC Childcare Cooperative will continue to provide quality care and education for our young children.

9 Let me take this opportunity to wish NTUC Childcare Cooperative every success as it takes its place with the other NTUC Cooperatives.

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