

SINGAPORE NATIONAL STATEMENT, DELIVERED BY DR VIVIAN BALAKRISHNAN, MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER RESOURCES, AT THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20), RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL, ON 22 JUNE 2012

Mr Chairman,

Distinguished delegates,

Twenty years ago, member countries of the United Nations forged the milestone Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21. This Earth Summit was a historic moment for humanity and set out the key issues which framed the global discussions in the ensuing years to preserve the environment for future generations. Similarly, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development ten years after Rio, we were able to agree on the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

2 Today, we gather here again to ensure that the good work produced will be further strengthened in the face of new and emerging challenges. Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation can only be as effective as the level of political support they enjoy. We need to make every decision at Rio+20 count.

Mr Chairman,

3 While it is the right of every country to pursue economic and social development, these efforts should be achieved in a balanced manner and with prudence. The Rio+20 conference is a fitting occasion for the world to agree on steps towards sustainable development, for the good of our peoples.

4 Singapore has long recognised the significance that sustainable development plays in our national development. To us, a Green Economy is about developing

sustainably for the long term. We believe that the special needs and characteristics of each country and region should be recognised, which is why there cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to the Green Economy. We have only 700 square kilometres in Singapore and we are bereft of natural resources. Singapore faces strong competing demands for limited land for housing, drinking water, recreation, industry, commerce and cultural activities. Right from the start, we took a development plan that ensured that even as we grew our economy and population, the environment would also be well taken care of. Today, Singapore is a clean and green city, with our integrated urban planning approach, but this has required a careful and judicious balance between economic and population growth, together with environmental protection. We have made considerable efforts to identify, understand and address the challenges such as resource constraints, changing demographics and the growing demands on urban infrastructural services.

5 Singapore's efforts at sustainable development have long been guided by three key principles. The first is long-term integrated planning, which requires a strategic and holistic perspective of our needs and circumstances; second, we adopt a pragmatic and cost-effective mindset and we are prepared to incur short-term costs in order to achieve the benefits of long-term goals; third, we rely on technology so that we can respond to the challenges quickly and with improved capabilities. Such an approach has served us well in many areas such as land-use planning, pollution control, water management, waste management, energy efficiency, and transport management.

6 Singapore fully supports the development of Sustainable Development Goals. Singapore released our Sustainable Singapore Blueprint in 2009 and this sets out our 2030 targets for sustainable development as well as the strategies to help us achieve these targets. In addition, we are preparing a practical guide called the Singapore Liveability Framework, which is scheduled for release at the World Cities Summit in Singapore next month. This Framework captures the lessons and principles of how Singapore developed as a highly liveable city with a very high density. Though we were driven by our natural constraints, we think that our

development model can be used as a practical guide for helping to create other liveable and sustainable cities in the context of sustainable development – this is entirely keeping with our discussions here at Rio+20.

Mr Chairman,

7 To support the global sustainable development agenda, all our national strategies must be coordinated and supported by a forward-thinking and effective global governance regime. Rio+20 has laid the basis for an enhanced and strengthened Institutional Framework on Sustainable Development. Singapore fully supports common global efforts that are aimed at enhancing the work of the UN bodies, particularly with respect to integration of the environment, economic and social dimensions.

8 I take this opportunity to congratulate and thank the Brazilian government for its excellent organisation and skilful leadership in achieving a consensus of this outcome document. This has not been an easy task. But the text has succeeded in setting out for us a clear agenda for action to ensure that the world pursues the path of sustainable development.

9 It was with great flexibility in the spirit of unity and understanding that all our countries came together to produce this outcome. We need to build on what has been achieved at Rio+20 to continue working closely together on implementation actions.

10 The UN and its bodies need to take on the mandates given to them to set clear and visionary directions to guide all our countries on this long but certain path towards sustainable development. On their part, all our countries should take the opportunity to relook at their national policies and capabilities to take stock of how they can work closely with the UN. And equally important, it is necessary for

countries to share with each other best practices and experiences in sustainable development.

11 Allow me to conclude by assuring you that Singapore stands committed to play our part to realise the aspirations we share in this milestone conference. It is up to us, the Member States, and the people that we represent, to rally the necessary political will to act for our collective good and to secure the well-being of our family and our future generations.

12 Thank you very much.

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