

Speech by Mr Teo Chee Hean, Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security and Minister for Home Affairs, at the launch of the National Climate Change Strategy 2012 (NCCS-2012) Public Consultation and prize presentation for the Nati

Distinguished guests, Teachers and students,

Climate change is a global challenge. Singapore is not spared from its impacts. As a low-lying island-state, we are vulnerable to rising sea levels and extreme weather events. As a small, open economy, Singapore is also affected by the impacts of climate change on other countries. We, together with the international community, will therefore need to take concrete steps to act against climate change.

Opportunities for Action

Climate change is caused by rising emissions of greenhouse gases. These gases are emitted when we burn fossil fuels to generate electricity, drive our vehicles and manufacture the goods we use every day. Climate change presents threats. But it also presents opportunities for us.

For instance, homeowners can reduce their impact on the environment and save on their utility bills when they use more energy-efficient appliances. Researchers can help uncover low-cost, energy efficient solutions, which businesses can adopt. NGOs play a part as well to raise awareness and galvanise community action to fight climate change. And we have with us today, many youths with good ideas that can be put into action.

The Government supports such initiatives from the community. We hope that the collective efforts from the people, private and public sectors will help build a sense of shared ownership in developing our national strategy and measures to tackle climate change.

The Government wants your views on how we can tackle climate change

The Government is therefore embarking on a series of public consultations to seek feedback on climate change-related issues. The e-consultation portal which will be launched today will be the first of such consultations by the National Climate Change Secretariat (NCCS) and the ministries and agencies under the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Climate Change. This e-consultation will cover households, transport and economic opportunities – areas that affect the lives of Singaporeans. Over the next few months, we aim to also reach out to different segments of the population through focus group sessions and community forums.

I would like to encourage Singaporeans from all walks of life to come forward and share your ideas with us. The results of your feedback will contribute towards the development of the National Climate Change Strategy 2012, or NCCS-2012, which will document our national strategy to address climate change. Targeted for release by the middle of next year, NCCS-2012 will

elaborate on our current sustainable development strategy outlined in the Sustainable Singapore Blueprint and detail how we intend to meet Singapore's unconditional target¹ to reduce emissions by 7% to 11% below business as usual (BAU) levels in 2020.

The NCCS-2012 is the important foundation to our long term strategies and actions needed to tackle climate change beyond 2020. We will need to do so in a manner that addresses our international competitiveness and cost of living considerations. Your feedback and your suggestions will ensure a strong foundation.

Your actions will build on what Singapore has achieved so far

Support from all Singaporeans will help co-create sustainable solutions. Already, we have done much as a nation. Since independence, we have always taken a long-term and holistic view of developmental issues, balancing growth and environmental considerations in our decisions. Singapore established its Environment Ministry in 1972, well before many other countries formed similar ministries. Our policies for urban and environmental issues also reduce our growth of emissions and promote sustainability.

Car usage and car population growth in Singapore have been moderated. The bulk of our fuel supply has been switched from fuel oil to much cleaner natural gas. Each of these policies has reduced our emissions.

Building on these efforts, we can do more. We recognise that Singapore has fewer options than many countries to reduce emissions, given our limited access to non-carbon based energy sources such as wind and geothermal energy. But we will do our best.

Our approach has primarily been to use less-carbon intensive fossil fuels such as natural gas, and to improve energy efficiency in all sectors. We have also invested resources to test-bed alternative energy sources such as solar photovoltaics so that Singapore will be better positioned to adopt such technologies more widely when they become more cost-effective. We have also invested significantly in R&D through the National Energy Innovation Challenge and to build up R&D capabilities in our universities. At the same time, we are adapting to climate change. We are studying Singapore's vulnerabilities so as to be able to put in place appropriate measures in key areas such as coastal protection, drainage and urban infrastructure to enhance our resilience to the long-term physical impacts.

Your Actions Make a Difference

The Government will continue to do its part on climate change, but the Government's efforts alone in this endeavour will not be sufficient. Every individual's actions matter. Singapore's plans to reduce emissions and to prepare ourselves for the impacts of climate change can only be met by concerted and sustained efforts from everyone.

The inaugural National Climate Change Competition is a platform for youths to contribute ideas. Earlier this year, the NCCS, together with the Ministry of Education, National Environment Agency and the National Youth Achievement Award Council of Singapore, organised the Competition to invite students and youths to contribute ideas on how to reduce emissions. Some 140 entries were received.

I am heartened by our students' and youths' energy and enthusiasm, as well as the good proposals they have come up with. For instance, one of the student groups at the National University of Singapore has put up a campaign to generate greater awareness of climate change on campus. Other student groups have also come up with creative ways to raise awareness and encourage their peers to take action. Fengshan Primary School has created a board game while Yishun Town Secondary has developed comic strips to reach out to their friends, family and the wider community about the simple acts to combat climate change.

Yet other groups showed entrepreneurship and innovation. A team of NTU students developed a smart phone application to share green tips with households and help them to track their home electricity consumption. To incentivise more homeowners to come onboard and participate actively, the team is also intending to set up a social enterprise to work with companies to offer vouchers and rebates to those who manage to achieve significant electricity savings. Another team from Temasek Polytechnic has designed an energy saver which helps remind users to turn off appliances that are on stand-by power mode. This energy-saving device will not only help save electricity costs, but also reduce the impact on the environment. Such ideas and efforts are laudable indeed. My congratulations to all participants. Our students and youths have showed how the people, private and public sector can work together to create deployable solutions.

A National Approach for Our Future and Future Generations

Climate change is a global issue which affects us all. Addressing it requires a national approach -- one where everyone can play a part. We will need innovative ideas to modify the way we live, work and play, in order to reduce our energy emissions. Indeed, what matters most are the actions and contributions of every individual and business, because each of us can make a difference to our future and our future generations. Your views are important and we look forward to hearing from you in the coming months on addressing climate change.

Thank you

¹ Although a legally-binding global agreement has yet to be reached, Singapore has pledged to implement measures by 7-11 % below the 2020 Business-As-Usual (BAU) levels. The target of 16% below 2020 BAU levels is contingent on a legally-binding global agreement in which all countries implement their commitments in good faith.