

**STATEMENT BY HER EXCELLENCY TAN YEE WOAN,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SINGAPORE TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON THE ADOPTION OF
THE OUTCOME OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR)
OF SINGAPORE AT THE 18TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS
COUNCIL, GENEVA, 22 SEPTEMBER 2011**

Madam President

1 The Singapore delegation welcomes this opportunity to provide updates on developments since the 11th Session of the UPR Working Group in May, during which the review of Singapore was conducted. On behalf of the Singapore Government, I would like to reiterate our appreciation to our Troika, namely Bahrain, Djibouti and Spain, the Secretariat, and all delegations and stakeholders who have contributed in one way or another, for example through the submission of advance questions, participation in the interactive dialogue, or their presence during the various phases of the UPR on Singapore, including our session right now.

2 First, let me say that the UPR process has been a very instructive experience for us. We took a “whole-of-government” approach in our preparations for the UPR. Officials from all relevant government ministries and agencies met regularly for more than a year to evaluate the effectiveness of our domestic policies and debate whether more could be done. Along the way, long-held assumptions were challenged and hard questions were asked. The Singapore Government also held regular consultations with civil society organisations to better understand their perspectives. Most importantly, we went into the UPR with an open mind. We were prepared to listen to alternative views, suggestions as well as criticisms. If we were convinced that there was a better way to deal with a particular issue or problem, we were prepared to change our approach. But we needed to be convinced first.

3 It was in this spirit that we welcome all comments and recommendations made during the course of the UPR process. As you may recall, at our UPR on 6 May, Singapore received 112 recommendations of which we accepted 52, rejected 21 and deferred 39 recommendations for fuller discussions within the Government and with relevant stakeholders. I

am pleased to report that after careful consideration, we have decided to accept 23 of the pending recommendations in part, and 9 in full. This means that Singapore supports, either fully or partially, 84 out of the 112, ie, 75% of the recommendations that we received. Our written response to the 39 recommendations which were deferred for further consideration is contained in document A/HRC/18/11/Add. 1 which has been circulated as an addendum to the Report of the UPR Working Group on Singapore.

4 Overall, the majority of the recommendations that we are not able to support were those related to crime and security issues. For instance, there were recommendations for Singapore to end mandatory death penalty and corporal punishment. We have explained the reasons for our policies in our National Report and during the interactive dialogue at the Working Group Session in May.

5 Another cluster of recommendations that we could not support pertain to the establishment of a National Human Rights Institution. As we have explained during the interactive dialogue, our preference is for a decentralised but interlocking and mutually reinforcing system of human rights protection. We have for instance, established various interagency committees such as those on CEDAW and CRC which also engage other stakeholders through public consultations. We did not accept a recommendation to set up an independent body for child rights for similar reasons. We believe that the best approach in addressing children's rights and issues is through an integrated system of legislation, policies and services. There are currently avenues to receive and deal with any complaints or concerns with regard to children's issues. Where necessary, independent monitoring mechanisms to safeguard the welfare of children are also in place. We believe that this approach has worked well for us.

6 On the recommendation to implement the Bangkok Rules, while we recognise in principle the merits of the Bangkok Rules, we did not accept the recommendation to adopt them as we believe that each country should determine the best approach in ensuring the proper treatment of women prisoners, taking into consideration its domestic situation and other relevant factors. In page 91 of the Report of the UPR Working Group on Singapore, we have explained why we were unable to accept the recommendation to establish an independent elections body. There are also a few

recommendations that we are unable to support as they are based on incorrect assumptions or premises.

Ratifying core international human rights (HR) instruments

7 We have accepted in part the many recommendations for Singapore to consider ratifying various international human rights (HR) instruments. This is in line with Singapore's policy to constantly review and consider accession to the HR instruments that we are not yet parties to. Singapore takes our treaty obligations very seriously, and before acceding to any instrument we try our best to ensure that our domestic framework is ready to implement the obligations fully and effectively.

8 I am pleased to share that since we last met, Singapore has ratified the International Labour Organisation's Maritime Labour Convention on 15 June 2011. With this, Singapore has strengthened its commitment to bringing about decent work conditions for seafarers through applying the Convention's provisions to Singapore-flagged ships. I understand that we are the first Asian country to have done so. In addition, as announced during the interactive dialogue, Singapore intends to accede to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) by end-2012.

9 I take this opportunity to assure the Council that Singapore constantly reviews the declarations and reservations which we had filed upon our ratification of HR instruments. Consistent with this policy of review, and following significant developments in the practice of *sharia* law in Singapore, Singapore has submitted, on 30 June 2011, a partial withdrawal of our 1995 reservation to CEDAW. These developments were the result of considerable effort and commitment on the part of the responsible agencies, including the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (or "MUIS").

Trafficking-in-Persons (TIP)

10 Singapore appreciates the recommendations with respect to the protection of victims of trafficking. As a densely populated city state with high people flows, we recognize that we are an attractive destination country for human smugglers and human traffickers. We are therefore committed to tackling TIP and our efforts in doing so have increased over the years.

11 Victims of trafficking are neither treated as criminals nor prosecuted for offences committed as a direct result of their having been trafficked. They are not subjected to deportation or forced return but are provided with the necessary support and assistance. The government works closely with a network of NGOs, CSOs, hospitals and schools to ensure that shelter and protection are extended to victims of trafficking, including legal, financial, medical, psychological and counselling assistance. Last year alone, we funded shelter for more than 500 persons in TIP-related cases. Singapore's Inter-Agency TIP Taskforce is engaging several foreign embassies as part of our efforts to strengthen our partnership and coordination with neighbouring countries on the issue of human trafficking. In addition, Singapore looks forward to working closely with the specialist anti-trafficking units of other ASEAN countries, following a decision to formalise regular meetings and enhance collaboration among the units at a July 2011 ASEAN meeting chaired by Singapore. Singapore is developing a National Plan of Action to step up efforts to fight trafficking in persons, which will also include measures to improve victim care and protection.

Children and Women's Rights

12 Singapore is committed to implementing the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee and the Committee on the Rights of Child, consistent with the CEDAW and CRC treaty obligations applicable to us. Several recommendations we received at our UPR in May affirmed our efforts in upholding the welfare and rights of children in Singapore. I am pleased to inform you that Singapore has made further progress in enhancing the legal protection for children with the recent amendments to the Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA), which came into force on 20 July 2011. All children and young persons' homes will now be licensed under the amended CYPA. This will further enhance the welfare, care and protection of children in Singapore.

13 Singapore has also made progress in enhancing legal protection for women with the recent amendments to the Women's Charter in January 2011. The amendments serve to strengthen the enforcement of maintenance procedures and mitigate the impact of divorces on women. Singapore presented our Fourth Periodic Report at the 49th Session of the UN CEDAW Committee on 22 July 2011. We are firmly committed to ensuring the progress of women and to the full and practical realisation of our CEDAW obligations.

Racial and Religious Harmony

14 On the recommendation to address the concerns raised by Dr Githu Muigai, the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and xenophobia during his visit to Singapore in April 2010, we have addressed those concerns during the interactive dialogue with Dr Muigai at the 17th session of the HRC when he presented the report. We have also submitted written comments on his recommendations which have been circulated as a HRC document under A/HRC/17/G12. Racial and religious harmony is of paramount importance to Singapore. The Government will continue to encourage and support civic and community initiatives that promote harmony amongst different ethnic and religious communities.

Migrant Workers

15 We have accepted in full a number of recommendations on migrant workers. Singapore takes the well-being of migrant workers seriously. Under our regulations, employers are, among other things, required to provide proper housing and adequate rest, make prompt salary payments and pay for medical treatment. We continually review our regulations to refine employers' responsibilities and keep pace with the changing employment landscape. For instance, recruitment regulations were recently tightened to reduce migrant worker debt in Singapore. The Singapore Government works closely with representatives of labour sending countries on a variety of issues and will continue our efforts to improve protections for foreign workers in Singapore.

Engagement of Civil Society Organisations

16 In rounding up, I think it is worth mentioning the role that civil society organisations (CSOs) have played in Singapore's follow-up to the UPR. Consistent with the consultations with local stakeholders which we undertook in the preparation of our National Report, the Singapore Government held another dialogue with interested civil society organisations (CSOs) in August after the UPR. We will be continuing these interactions with the CSOs as they have been helpful in promoting active citizenry and allowing us to gain a better understanding of the concerns of our people. We would like to express our appreciation to these CSOs for their tireless efforts.

Madam President

17 Thank you for listening to this quick update of some of the key developments since the UPR Working Group in May. Singapore will continue to work hard to improve the lives and well-being of our people while respecting the fundamental principles of human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Singapore Constitution.

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