



PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE TO THE UNITED NATIONS

318 East 48th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017 • Tel. (212) 826-0840 • Fax (212) 826-2964 • <http://www.mfa.gov.sg/newyork>

“Small States – The Challenges of Sustainable Development”

Mr President,
Secretary-General Ban,
Dear Colleagues,

1 Our congratulations to Your Excellency, Mr Sam Kahamba Kutesa on your election as President of the 69th General Assembly. We wish you success in the coming year.

2 We are not living in the worst of times. But they are not the best of times either. Standards of living are far higher for more of the human race than ever before. But we face global crises of several types: internal and cross-border conflicts, epidemics, disasters both natural and man-made, climate change, and international crime.

3 We are facing grave threats from terrorism and extremism. The latest manifestation is the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). It is brutal, cruel and a travesty of all that religion stands for. Their unspeakable cruelty,

including abductions and brutal murders of civilians, constitute crimes against humanity. Singapore condemns these terrorist actions in the strongest possible terms. ISIS will continue to target those who do not conform to its extremist agenda.

4 The threat of such terrorism and radical ideology is not confined to the Middle East. It affects the whole world. An estimated 15,000 foreigners from at least 80 countries, including from Southeast Asia, have travelled to fight in Syria and Iraq. That ISIS can attract so many foreign fighters highlights the need for a comprehensive strategy to counter them. In addition to military and intelligence efforts, we must also combat the radical ideology used to recruit foreign fighters, and which fuels their extremist agenda.

5 Singapore firmly supports all international and regional cooperation efforts. We welcome the strong leadership of the United States, in particular the formation of the international coalition to combat the ISIS threat. We also welcome the Jeddah declaration by Arab countries to stand united against ISIS. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178 (2014) on foreign terrorist fighters, which Singapore co-sponsored, is an important step to combat global terrorism, and will be critical to: cutting off financial and material support for ISIS and preventing the movement of foreign terrorist fighters.

6 No country can insulate itself from these problems. We need to combat them at all levels. Critically: fair economic development, good governance, political and, social stability will increase a country's resilience against them.

Post-2015 Development Agenda

7 The President's choice of *"Delivering on and implementing a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda"* for this year's General Assembly, and his emphasis on a comprehensive and action-oriented post-2015 Development Agenda, are particularly timely. Singapore commends the Open-Working Group on its work on the Sustainable Development Goals, and looks forward to the UN Secretary General's report of its recommendations.

8 We also welcome the contributions from major fora, such as the Third Conference of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) that was held in Samoa recently. Singapore had the privilege of co-chairing the preparatory committee with New Zealand for this fora. It is important that the views and concerns of small states are properly factored into the post-2015 Development Agenda.

9 The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were successful due to the pragmatic, outcome-based, and quantifiable approach to the targets. We hope this same approach will be taken in respect of the post-2015 Development Agenda. Those MDGs not fully achieved should be included as an intrinsic part of the post-2015 Development Agenda.

Principles for Sustainable Development

10 Singapore is participating actively in the discussions on the post-2015 Development Agenda, focusing on those areas where we can contribute. In this regard, we will focus on key principles that were critical to our development path, and which might be relevant to other developing countries. These are: first, honest and competent government. Corruption is a drag on development, and an intrinsic source of social instability. Fighting it needs political will, strong leadership, and unceasing vigilance from the whole society. Rule of law is integral to sustainable development.

11 Second, Governments need sound and effective institutions. These institutions, including the civil service, judiciary, and law enforcement system, must be built on core principles of equal justice and meritocracy, regardless of ethnicity, religion or gender. Social capital – the trust that people have in each other, their leaders and the system – is as necessary to sustainable development as financial capital. The third principle is that economic and social policy must be pragmatic, not dogmatic. Singapore does not advocate any standard model of government or economic structure. The only model is to work with what you have within the context of your culture and resources, prudently and for the benefit of the people. Policies must be judged by their outcomes, not according to ideological content. Both consistent attention and responsive implementation are necessary to achieve long-term goals. We will put forward these ideas during the discussion.

Why Sustainable Cities Matter

12 Since the urban centres of small states tend to have disproportionately large social, political and economic weight in the country, a dysfunctional urban centre can have a much greater negative effect on a small country than on a big one. Today, slightly more than half of the world's population lives in cities; by 2050, this will go up to 70%. Most of this growth will take

place in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. As noted in the Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the post-2015 Development Agenda (page 17), *"cities are where the battle for sustainable development will be won and lost."* Mismanaged urbanisation can intensify inequalities. Asia is already home to 61% of the world's slum dwellers, and Africa is home to 25.5%. The OECD has predicted that by 2030, two billion people could live in urban poverty. They will be at risk from: overcrowding, epidemics, crime and pollution.

13 And yet, urbanisation has in fact been significant in the progress towards achievement of the MDGs, especially in reducing poverty. Successful cities bring up their rural hinterlands. Today, cities account for over 80% of global GDP. The Rio+20 Outcome Document itself recognises that well-planned cities promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies. They are engines for growth and more resource efficient than rural areas.

14 The challenge is therefore really to manage urbanisation well. Singapore has been contributing to the discussions on sustainable urbanisation as co-chair of the Group of Friends on Sustainable Cities. Singapore's Centre for Liveable Cities was established in 2008 to distil, create and share knowledge on sustainable cities. It has developed a Liveability Framework¹ as a tool to analyse what a sustainable city would actually entail and help countries define the specific policies they need to achieve this goal. To us, a sustainable city means having a competitive economy, environmental sustainability, and a high quality of life for all inhabitants, rich and poor alike. We hope that this Liveability Framework can

¹ The CLC Liveability Framework can be found at www.clc.gov.sg/Research/clcframework.htm. To achieve the three desirable outcomes of a competitive economy, environmental sustainability and a high quality of life, cities need integrated planning and development, and dynamic urban governance.

be incorporated as part of discussions for the UN Conference on Housing and Urban Development (HABITAT III) in 2016.

15 In the area of water and sanitation, last year, Singapore successfully tabled an UNGA resolution to designate 19 November as World Toilet Day in the context of Sanitation for All. This year, we will commemorate it together with relevant UN agencies and CSOs by focusing on the serious problems faced by women and girls who lack basic sanitation access. This is an issue which needs more attention than it has received so far.

The Way Forward

16 Once the post-2015 Development Agenda has been agreed, countries will need to consider implementation. South-south, north-south and triangular co-operation in capacity building and sharing of experiences are important parts of the way forward. In our early years, Singapore benefitted from the expert advice of specialised agencies, international organisations, and developed countries.

17 In 1992, we set up the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP) to share our development experience – both the successes and the failures – with other developing countries. The SCP is designed to build capacity in fields that could be of interest to countries, in the hope that this will smoothen their developmental path. Recently, at the 3rd SIDS Conference in Samoa, Singapore launched a dedicated SCP package for SIDS.

Conclusion

18 In conclusion, Singapore supports the universal and inclusive approach to the post-2015 Development Agenda. Each society must draw its own lessons from its own experiences, and find solutions according to its national circumstances. Naturally, there will be differences of opinion but we must not lose sight of the ultimate goal of ending extreme poverty in our lifetimes. With the MDGs, we managed to halve the number living below the poverty line and there is real hope that we can do better.

19 Let us all work together to ensure that by the 70th anniversary of the UN in 2015, we can unite around a clear vision of how to provide our future generations the “future we want”.