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Biodiversity and Climate Change

KEYNOTE STATEMENT

by

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

In southern Africa, it is the beginning of the rainy season, but the Zambezi River is already well over six metres deep as a result of the heaviest rains for most a decade. The depth of the river is rapidly approaching the 7.6 metres that it reached during the disastrous flooding of 2000, which affected more than half a million people in Mozambique.

There is not a single week where climate change does not make the headlines in the news. The *Human Development Report 2007/2008* issued last month in Bali by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) contains a catalogue of the "climate shocks" that have hit the world. Europe had its most intense heat wave for 50 years and Spain suffered its worst drought in more than a century. Likewise, the severe drought that affected Australia was the worst in more than one century. Japan had its greatest number of tropical cyclones in a single year. Monsoons displaced 14 million people in India, seven million in Bangladesh, and three million in China, which has seen the heaviest rainfall and second highest death toll since records began. Cyclones battered Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam. As a result, 66 million people were made homeless in South Asia. Hurricanes have devastated the Caribbean and Central America, killing more than 1,600 mainly Mayan people in Guatemala. Droughts and flooding have affected 22 African countries, driving 14 million people out of their homes.

Twelve of the thirteen "flash" appeals launched in 2007 by the United Nations for emergency relief were related to weather events. In sum, 2007 set a record of 950 natural disasters. The number of natural disasters linked to the climate has increased four-fold since 1960. Eleven out of the twelve past years have been the hottest years since meteorological data were first recorded in 1850. A study by NASA has shown that, during the last 30 years, world temperatures have been the highest in 12,000 years.

While it is true that natural disasters have always been a part of human history, the frequency, gravity and impact of these natural phenomenon and in particular those relating to climate have over the last few years attained such proportions that the concept of peace and international security has to be viewed afresh from a different angle. Indeed, the issue of environmental protection has become part and parcel of world peace and security

The fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, prepared by some 2,500 experts from 130 countries, is categorical. The current concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is greater than has ever been observed in the last 650,000 years. Climate change is real and human activity is its main factor. The report specifies that even if greenhouse-gas concentrations were now to stabilize, human-caused global warming and the rising of sea and ocean levels would continue for centuries due to the complexity of the world's climate and the interconnectivity of ecosystems. Such conclusions require urgent and unprecedented efforts and interventions. The cost of inaction has been evaluated by the Stern report at more than 5,000 billion dollars. Thanks to the leadership of Germany, a Stern-like report on the cost of inaction for the loss of biodiversity is being prepared.

Therefore, it's a great honour to join you today and to be given this unique opportunity to address such a distinguished audience to share with you modest ideas on the international framework for biodiversity and climate change. I would to sincerely thank the Singapore Environment Council for honouring me with their invitation to be the keynote speaker at this year's Singapore Environment Lecture. I would like to thank all of you for honouring me by your presence. I feel indeed humbled and overwhelmed by your massive participation today. I commend the Council for its work on protecting the environment, as well as for engaging and supporting individuals, business organizations and environmental groups in their own efforts to address environmental issues. Let me therefore pay tribute to Professor Tommy Koh for his outstanding contribution in advancing the sustainable development agenda here in Singapore, in the region and in the world. I feel honoured and privileged and overwhelmed by his friendship, as evidenced by his kind invitation addressed to me to visit the great nation of "Singa Pura". Professor Koh , thank you very much.

Climate change is real, and represents a global challenge not only for humankind, but for every life on Earth. It is for this reason that Ms Gro Harlem Bruntland, in addressing the United Nations

General Assembly in May last year, following her appointment as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on climate change stated "It is irresponsible, reckless and deeply immoral to question the seriousness of the situation. The time for diagnosis is over and the time for action is now." She stressed the importance of 2007 as a year when the wheels have to be set in motion.

Ms Bruntland's call for action has been heard, and 2007 will be remembered as the year of renewed commitment by the international community at the highest level to address the climate-change crisis. In taking up his assignment, Mr Ban Ki-Moon, the Secretary General of the United Nations, decided to make climate change as one of his highest priorities. He designated three special envoys on climate change.

In April, and for the first time in its history, the United Nations Security Council devoted a special meeting to address the issue of climate change and security. In July, the General Assembly convened—also for the first time—a high-level dialogue on climate change. In September, a Summit of the General Assembly on climate change was convened with the participation of more than 70 heads of State and government. In December the 14,000 participants attending the climate conference in Bali agreed on a road-map for the post-Kyoto commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Six heads of State and Government, including the Prime Minister of Singapore, took part at this historical event.

A couple of days earlier, in Oslo, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Mr. Al Gore, the former Vice-President of the United State of America, and to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In so doing, the prestigious Norwegian Nobel Committee has recognized, for the second time in its history, the environmental dimension of the concept of peace and security.

The security implications of environmental degradation were recognized by the Committee in 2004, when it awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to an environmentalist for the first time in history, namely Professor Wangari Maathai. On that historical occasion, Mr. Ole Danbolt Mjøs, the chairman of this prestigious institution noted that, "This year, the Norwegian Nobel Committee has evidently broadened its definition of peace still further. Environmental protection has become yet another path to peace."

In accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, Professor Maathai stated that, "There can be no peace without equitable development and there can be no development without sustainable management of the environment in a democratic and peaceful space. I hope that this prize will help many people see the link between peace, development and environment." Sustainable development is indeed the new name for peace and security. Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai has tirelessly worked to highlight the link between peace and the environment, "In a few decades, the relationship between the environment, resources and conflict may seem almost as obvious as the connection we see today between human rights, democracy and peace." Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier of Germany recently stated, "There is a 'cold war' at the North Pole that we have to prevent. Climate change is a threat to worldwide peace and security."

According to the fourth IPCC Assessment Report, global warming and melting snow and glaciers caused a 10-20 cm increase in sea levels in the twentieth century and will lead to an increase of 88 cm before the end of this century. According to NASA, 2007 set a record of ice-melting in the Greenland leading to the melting of one million km^2 of ice, covering an area twice the size of France and corresponding to one billion tonnes of ice. There is a danger therefore that global warming will jeopardize the existence of the 160,000 glaciers in the world. The melting of snow on the Himalayas caused the proliferation of the number of lakes situated in high altitude. In Nepal, they are estimated at 2,323 but 20 per cent of them constitute a threat to neighbouring communities because of the risk of the waters overflowing. Since more than 50 per cent of the major cities of the world are situated in coastal areas and because more than 3 billion people live less than 100 km from the coast, the rise in the water level will have disastrous consequences on the world population. In Bali, last month the President of Maldives, reminded the international community of the statement made twenty years ago in October 1987, at the United Nations General Assembly describing Maldives as "a nation in danger": Some 65 per cent of the Maldives land mass is barely a metre above sea level.

Today 4 out of 10 people in the world live in countries with a severe shortage of drinking water. While a citizen in the developed world enjoys the availability of 135 litres a day, an African citizen has to survive with 14 litres only and in Namibia for example with 5 litre a day. For example, as a result of climate change and increasing human demands on ecosystems, total available water in the Niger, Lake Chad and Senegal basins has decreased by 40 to 60 per cent over the past 100 years. In 2025, two thirds of humanity, i.e. more than 5.5 billion people will experience a similar situation.

According to a CIA report the shortage of water will in the near future constitute one of the major sources of tension and armed conflict in the world. According to this report, more than 30 countries receive more than a third of their consumption of drinking water from outside of their borders. Such a forecast takes on its true meaning when we consider the fact that out of the 268 international river basins, shared by 145 countries and feeding 40 per cent of the world population, more than 158 are not governed by any form of joint cooperation mechanism between neighbouring countries. In some cases more than 16 countries share this natural resource. That is the case, Congo and the Niger rivers as well as the Nile.

The scarcity of water and climate change will have far reaching implication on human health. WHO is categorical: Climate change is one of the main causes of the high increase in the number of new infectious diseases. Since 1960, more than 35 infectious diseases have been recorded. The number of deaths resulting from new or old infectious diseases has doubled since 1980. The last General Assembly of the World Health Organization confirmed that global warming has already begun to impact on patterns of water-born and parasite illness in areas vulnerable to drought and flooding. It is estimated that climate change has already directly or indirectly killed more than 1 million people globally since 2000. More than half of those deaths have occurred in the Asia-Pacific area, the world's most populous region. Those figures do not include deaths linked to urban air pollution, which kills about 800,000 worldwide each year. Singapore saw mean annual temperatures increase 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit between 1978 and 1998, while the number of dengue fever cases jumped 10-fold during the same period. I have been informed yesterday by the Director of Public Heath that 20 cases of dengue fever were recorded last year in Singapore.

Malaria has recently reached Bhutan and new areas in Papua New Guinea for the first time. Experts predicts that global warming could lead to a return of malaria is Britain. Today, malaria accounts for the death of 1.5- 2.7 million people each year, mainly in Africa. Every 30 seconds a child dies from malaria. Scientific studies have proven the strong link between the proliferation of cholera cases and the increase in temperature of the affected regions

The scarcity of drinking water will have disastrous consequences on the acceleration of desertification particularly in Africa where it has attained alarming proportions. Today, more than 1.2 billion people living in 110 countries are affected by desertification. It is threatening the lives of more than 135 million people. According to some estimates more than 6 million hectares of arable land are covered by this phenomenon which affects the poorest of the poorest. According to IPCC, more than 100 million people in Africa alone will be become climate change refugees. The recently released report of UNEP on the environment situation in Soudan demonstrates that the Darfur conflict is one of the consequences of climate change. Durant the last four years, 200,000 persons have been killed and 2, 2 million displaced in Darfur.

A report issued in April last year by top retired American military leaders concluded that climate change poses “serious threat to America’s national security and the US will likely be dragged into fights over water and other shortages.” The report warned that in the next 40 to 50 years there will be wars over water, increased hunger instability from worsening disease and rising sea levels and global warming-induced refugees. The report concluded that “chaos that results can be an incubator of civil strife, genocide and the growth of terrorism.”

If the climate change is a security issue, it is also a moral issue. Those who have contributed least to climate change will suffer the most. With its one tonne of annual $C0_2$ emissions per capita, representing less than 3% of the world total, Africa will suffer the most.

If climate change is the new threat to peace and human security, the loss of biodiversity is also another major threat to peace and security as it undermines the capacity of the ecosystems to continue providing their goods and services and sustaining life on Earth.

The findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the result of four years of work by more than 1,395 experts from 95 countries, are also very explicit: the pressures on the planet's natural functions caused by human activity have reached such a high level that the ability of ecosystems to satisfy the needs of future generations is seriously, and perhaps irretrievably, compromised. In the 30 years after 1950, more land was converted to cropland than in the entire period from 1700 to 1850. Since the appearance of man on Earth, impacts on the natural functions of our planet have never been as destructive as in the last 50 years, leading to an unprecedented extinction of biological diversity. During the last 50 years, one fourth of the world's top soil, one fifth of agricultural land and one third of its forests have been depleted.

During the last century, the extinction rate of species increased a thousand times. Twenty per cent of known bird species have already disappeared. Forty-one per cent of mammals are in decline and 28 per cent are under direct threat. 13 millions of forests, an area four time the size of Belgium, are being lost every year. Tropical forests are home to more than 80% of the earth's plants and animals. 8 km2 of tropical forests may contain 1500 plants species and 750 tree species. Here in Singapore there are more three than in North America. Although 95% of Singapore's original forests have gone, there are still 840 flowering species in the 163 hectares of the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. Some 35 per cent of mangroves have been destroyed in the last twenty years In the Caribbean, the average hard-coral cover has fallen from 50 to 10 per cent over the last three decades. Here in Singapore, 5% of the original area occupied by mangrove forests are still exist and it has been estimated that 60 % of Singapore s reefs have been lost. However 30% of hard coral of the world still can be found in Singapore. Approximately 35% of world crops depend on pollinators such as bees. However, their populations have already decreased by 30% in the last twenty years .Around 20 per cent of domestic animal breeds are at risk of extinction, with a breed lost each month.190 have become extinct in the past 15 years and 1,500 more are deemed at risk of extinction.

This unprecedented loss of biodiversioty was confirmed by the the Fourth Global Environment Outlook launched in October last year by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The most authoritative assessment of the state of the environment of our planet by the world enviornmental authority of the United Nations system, since the launch in 1987, of the Brundland report prepared by more than 500 experts and peer-reviewd by more than 1,000 experts, reiterates that we, human beings, are witnessing and are responsible for a reduction in distribution and functioning land, freshwater and marine biodiversity more rapid than at any time in human history. The "ecological footprint" of humankind now extends 20 per cent beyond the biological capacity of the planet. For some experts, we are at the eve of the sixth global mass extinction of species, and the first to be generated by we human beings.

This unprecedended lost of biodiversity is being compounded by climate change. The IPCC Assessment Report demonstrates that up to 30 per cent of all known species are likely to be at increased risk of extinction before the end of this century. As a result of climate change, in sub-Saharan Africa, between 25 and 40% of mammals in national parks will become endangered while as many as 2 per cent of the species currently classified as critically endangered will become extinct. In the Succulent Karoo and Fynbos ecosystems in Southern Africa, more than 50 per cent of habitat is expected to be lost by 2050.

Here in Asia, the IPCC report predicts that up to 50% of biodiversity of the region is at risk due to climate change while as much as 88% of reefs may be lost over the next 30 years. Furthermore, as many as 1,522 plant species in China and 2,835 plants in Indo-Burma could become extinct. Climate changes is threatening the rich biodiversity heritage of the region which sustains 30 per cent of the world's coral

reefs and mangroves, produces 40 per cent of the world's fish catch, and is considered one of the world's centres for tropical marine biodiversity.

Therefore climate change and the lost of biodiversity are the two major planetary threats facing man king. In fact, I would argue that loss of biological diversity is one the most serious effects, and at the same time driver, of climate change.

What is biodiversity and why is it important to human life, our lives?

Clean water and air, pollination of crops, food, buffers from floods and storm surges, non-proliferation of infectious diseases, cultural values, raw materials to meet consumer demands—all of these things that so many of us take for granted—are the direct result of an incredible diversity of plant and animal species and their intricate interactions. Together they provide the ecosystem services that ensure the well-being of humanity. We all rely on the environment for the basic necessities of life. More than 1.6 billion people depend on forests and forest products for their livelihood, while more than three billion people depend on marine and coastal biodiversity.

Singapore knows first-hand the value of ecosystem services provided by biodiversity: a large portion of your drinking water comes from catchment areas that have been classified as national parks so as to protect these natural water-purifiers and secure a clean water source for your city and country. More than this, robust biodiversity and healthy ecosystems offer protection from natural disasters and disease, and are the foundation for human culture. Indeed, without healthy ecosystems, lasting and sustained social and economic development is impossible.

The relationship between biodiversity and climate change is a two-way street. Yes, climate change is an important driver of biodiversity loss. At the same time, however, the loss of biodiversity and the deterioration of natural habitats also contribute to climate change.

Forests account for as much as 80% of the total above-ground terrestrial carbon while peatlands, which only cover 3% of the world's terrestrial surface, store 30% of all global soil carbon or the equivalent of 75% of all atmospheric carbon. As such, healthy forests and wetland systems have the potential to capture a significant portion of projected emissions.

Until recently, forests covered 47 per cent of the Earth's land surface. Since then, they have totally disappeared in 25 countries and, in a further 29 countries, 90 per cent of forest cover has been lost. Each year about 13 million hectares of the world's forests are lost due to deforestation. Deforestation is currently estimated to be responsible for 20% of the annual human induced CO_2 emissions. Because of the role of forests in storing carbon and providing essential goods and services, the conservation of forest biodiversity can considerably reduce emissions and have potential co-benefits for adaptation and sustainable development.

Moreover, sustainable land management in agricultural areas can increase carbon sequestration in the soil through techniques such as integrated pest management, conservation tillage, intercropping, and the planting of cover crops. In fact, when cover crops are used in combination with conservation tillage, soil carbon content can increase annually for a period of up to 50 years. The sustainable management of grazing land can provide similar co-benefits since such lands contain between 10 and 30% of the world's soil carbon stocks.

Resilient and robust ecosystems, with diverse species, are a key factor in mitigating the effects of climate change. A variety of crops and livestock are important resources against changing growing conditions. And, more pertinent to Singapore, intact coral reefs and mangroves are an important protection against coastal erosion, storms and sea-level rise. In fact, a study showed that communities that were protected by mangroves and other coastal plants escaped the 2004 tsunami with little damage while neighbouring villages without such protection were completely destroyed. Thus, maintaining biodiversity will not only make ecosystems resilient in the face of a changing climate, it will help moderate climate change and its impacts. Mitigating biodiversity loss and climate change is one in the same thing.

It is for this reason that the 2007 International Day for Biodiversity was celebrated under the theme of "Biodiversity and Climate Change". As the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon outlined on this occasion, "the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity is an essential element of any strategy to adapt to climate change".

So, where does that leave us, and where does that leave Singapore?

Naturally, to achieve change, one must begin with local actions, then national and regional. Initiatives at each level must be mutually reinforcing and thus require dialogue and cooperation. Climate change does not adhere to national or even regional borders. As we all know, the causes and effects are international. As a matter of fact, animal and plant species are not bounded by political boundaries either. Thus, Singapore's participation in regional and international efforts to mitigate climate change and conserve biodiversity is imperative.

When this country was chosen to host the Champions of the Earth Awards of 2006, Klaus Töpfer, then Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), noted that "Singapore has become an inspiration for other nations striving to achieve the goal of sustainable development". Indeed, the Singapore Green Plan 2012 is a road-map for achieving sustainable development and many projects are being implemented to protect the environment and the well being of the people.

The way the natural history of this city-state has changed over the last 200 years mirrors the changes that have taken place in Asia and gives an insight to what will happen to the region in the decade ahead . "Singa Pura", the Lion City, a country which has included nature as a national symbol and transformed the concept of " the garden in the city" into tangible reality has so much to share and to give to the rest of the region and to the word. Indeed nature is part of national heritage of the people of this great nation. Of particular relevance to biological diversity and climate change in Singapore is the creation of national reserves, such as Bukit Timah National Park, and the restoration of mangroves in the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve. I commend you on your initiatives and encourage you to continue this important conservation work. The value of catchment areas to urban water supplies and of mangroves to climate-change mitigation cannot be over-emphasized.

Furthermore, I wish to highlight Singapore's commitment to including all stakeholders in its environmental initiatives. There is an African proverb that says, "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." Singapore has embraced this concept and put it into practice in various projects. Students, supported by corporate sponsorship, were the main actors in the mangroves restoration project. Businesses have driven the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies. Politicians have ensured that catchment areas are protected. It is only too true that "Close partnership among the public, private and people sectors, [the 3Ps], is pivotal to [Singapore's] drive for environmental sustainability." When visiting yesterday the Sungei Buloh wetland reserve, I had the opportunity to witness the wonder and achievement of the 3 Ps policy as well as a living nature class in action. The partners, including the private sector, should be proud of this achievement. I applaud once again the Singapore Environment Council for its magnificent job. Indeed, you cannot protect if you don't know and you cannot protect if you don't have an interest to protect.

At the 2003 International Day of Biological Diversity celebrations, Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General at that time, stated, "The preservation of biodiversity is not just a job for governments. International and non-governmental organizations, the private sector and each and every individual have a role to play in changing entrenched outlooks and ending destructive patterns of behaviour." Because every person on this planet draws on global biodiversity in every aspect of his or her life, from health to employment to recreation, actually achieving conservation of biodiversity requires a multi-layered web of intersecting initiatives involving all stakeholders.

In addressing the New York business community early in 2007, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed that business, trade and investment are "essential pillars of peace and prosperity". He confirmed that the United Nations must engage more fully with non-State actors in order to bring about a prosperous, more secure and peaceful world. In today's interdependent world, business and the United

Nations share common goals of "building and supporting strong economies and communities, providing opportunities for people to pursue a livelihood, and ensuring that everyone can live in dignity". This statement is also relevant to Singapore and its business community as the government works to implement the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and mitigate climate change

At the regional level, Singapore is also a leader. Meeting here in Singapore, the leaders of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in adopting their Declaration on Environmental Sustainability recognized the unique contribution of biodiversity in meeting the climate-change challenges. They committed themselves to conserve their rich biodiversity by promoting access to, and sustainable utilization of, its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from these biological and genetic resources. They also committed themselves to achieve the Johannesburg biodiversity target aimed at reducing substantially the rate of loss of biodiversity by 2010. They have also agreed to promote and support the ASIAN Centre for Biodiversity as a regional centre for biodiversity conservation and management. I am extremely delighted of the agreement signed between the Secretariat and the Centre here in Singapore on Monday with a view of promoting the exchange of experience and disseminating the lessons learned.

Singapore, where 100 per cent of the population lives within 25 km of the coast, will be greatly affected by the negative impact of climate change including sea-level rise. It is therefore encouraging to see the leadership role played by Singapore in the ASEAN Working Group on Environmentally Sustainable Cities (AWGESC).

The year 2007 marked a paradigm shift and will be remembered as a major milestone. For the first time in history, the world's urban population will exceed its rural population. The majority of the world's population is now living in urban areas, mainly in poor countries; poor in terms of money, but very rich in terms of biodiversity. A new era is born, the era of "*Homo Urbanus*", the city dweller. The impact is expected to have far-reaching implications on humanity.

The growing urban world represents one of the most dramatic changes experienced by humanity in recent history. In 1820, London became the first modern city with a population of more than one million. Sixteenth other cities had joined the list by 1900. Today, the list includes 411 cities. The world's urban population has now reached 3.2 billion people. It has increased nearly fourfold since 1950. By 2030, the two thirds of humanity will live in cities. If not managed adequately, the growth of the urban population may accelerate the unprecedented loss of biodiversity of our planet. Although cities occupy only 2.8 per cent of the Earth's surface, urban dwellers use 75 per cent of the planet's natural resources. More than this, however, is the fact that nearly half of the world's major cities are located within 50 kilometres of the coast, and coastal population densities are 2.6 times greater than in inland areas. With such a concentration of human activities along fragile coastlines, only firm commitments and cooperation will avert the amplification of environmental degradation and land use conflicts. While this is nothing new to Singapore, some countries have only just begun to address these issues. Some would even say that the battle for life on Earth will be won or lost in cities.

It is for this reason that at the initiative of the Mayor of Curitiba, Brazil, the host of the eight meeting of the Conference of the Parties, 34 Mayors and their representatives adopted in March last year the " Curitiba Declaration on Cities and Biodiversity". As a host of the Convention Secretariat, the Mayor of Montreal has been elected as Vice President of the World Council of mayors in charge of biodiversity. At the initiative of Lady Mayor of Bonn, 80 mayors will meet in May 2008 with a view of establishing a Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity. The results will be submitted to the high-level segment of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which will be held for the first time with the participation of Heads of State and Government..

I applaud Singapore's commitment to designing and building more eco-friendly cities and the initiative to convene in June this year a World Cities Summit that will focus on environmental issues in urban settings, announced by Mr. Lee Hsien Loong, the Prime Minister of Singapore, in his address last month in Bali at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity stands ready to be a partner of this unique initiative.

We look also forward for the unique contribution that Singapore can make for the celebration of the 2010 International year on biodiversity, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly to create a world web of solidarity for protecting life on Earth.

What is lost in one country is lost to the world. Hence, each country has a vested interested in mitigating climate change. More than ever multilateral cooperation is required for addressing the environmental challenges. Never before in history have environmental issues received such intense consideration from international organisations, governments, and the general public. . In his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize, Al Gore stated that:

> "In the Kanji characters used in both Chinese and Japanese, 'crisis' is written with two symbols, the first meaning 'danger', the second 'opportunity'. By facing and removing the danger of the climate crisis, we have the opportunity to gain the moral authority and vision to vastly increase our own capacity to solve other crises that have been too long ignored."

The Rio conventions provide the adequate frameworks to respond to these crises. A new generation of multilateral environment agreements was born in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. The international community will remain for ever indebted to one of the best son of Singapore an environmentalist by heart and by passion. Indeed the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee of the Rio Summit and the Chair of its Committee of the Whole stated five years after Rio:

> "In the final analysis, the goal of sustainable development cannot be achieved by Government, business, experts, international organizations and NGOs alone. We have to win the hearts and minds of the citizens of the world. We have to inculcate in every child a love of nature. We have to influence the daily habits and lifestyles of peoples all over the world. We should aim to persuade every consumer in every country to internalize the ethic of 'reduce, re-use and recycle'."

In July last year, Al Gore challenged the citizens of world stating that:

> "Our home Earth is in danger. What is at risk of being destroyed is not the planet itself, but the conditions that have made it hospitable for human beings. The climate crisis offer us the chance to experience what a few generations in history have had the privilege of experiencing, a generational mission, a compelling moral purpose, a shared cause, and the thrill of being forced by circumstances to put aside the pettiness and conflict of politics and to embrace a genuine moral an spiritual challenges."

A citizen of Singapore and a citizen of the world, Professor Tommy Koh has made a unique contribution in responding to this generational challenges and the generation to come will remain indebted to him for his unique contribution in advancing the sustainable development agenda here in Singapore and in the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I invite you to join me to pay tribute to Professor Tommy Koh, the UNEP Champion of the Earth laureate, a true citizen of the world.

Thank you for your kind attention.