

CLOSING REMARKS BY SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, MR DESMOND LEE, AT THE WORLD CITIES SUMMIT PLENARY, 12 JULY 2016, SINGAPORE

Excellencies

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

World Cities Summit's Participation

- 1 A very good afternoon. It's a tremendous privilege to be able to speak at the closing plenary of this edition of the World Cities Summit.
- 2 Over the past few days at the Summit, we have had the privilege of having over 1000 delegates join us.
- 3 Including the participants of the Singapore International Water Week and CleanEnviro Summit Singapore, we have had more than 20,000 visitors and participants join us here on this island.
 - As Dr Liu mentioned, amongst the participants, we have had about 110 Mayors and city leaders representing 103 cities from 63 countries and regions from around the world.
- 4 You came together over the last few days in Singapore to share and exchange ideas and best practices to address challenges to liveability and sustainability in our cities.
- 5 Your discussions and presentations in the big halls and cosier meeting rooms covered a broad range of important topics, including areas such as governance, planning, resilience and innovation.
- 6 It is these qualitative aspects of such engagements that make the World Cities Summit a highly meaningful and purposeful endeavour.

Adopting an Integrated Approach to Urban Solutions

- 7 Whilst many innovative urban solutions have been profiled and discussed at this year's Summit, each city and the challenges they face are different.
- 8 There is no simple one size fits all solution.

- 9 What is critical for urban leaders is to keep an open mind, embrace innovation while recognising basics, and be willing to work with different stakeholders in an integrated manner to address the challenges we face.
- 10 In the course of the past hour and a half, listening to the speakers, what struck me was how apt it is that we close off this year's plenary talking about people, about future cities being driven by citizen innovation, citizen initiative, listening to people, knowing what people want and working with people to make cities human scale.
- 11 At the Young Leaders Symposium two days ago - some of you who joined me are here at this hall - we had a conversation with the chairman of Nestle, Mr Peter Brabeck. He said that the nineteenth century was the century of empire; the twentieth century was the century of the nation-state; and this, the twenty-first century is the century of cities. And I would like to add, it's that of cities and people.
- 12 And you see that as history and time goes by, we focus less on the legal, fictional actor to the people. And that is perhaps coincident with increasing accountability of governments, and also the increasing voice of the people - social activism. Social media and technology have enabled people's voice to be louder and more visible, to be heard and it had been able to galvanise people to action. So I think it's very apt that our facilitator, Mr Peter Ho, talked about moving from government to governance – government is an actor but governance is a system. To get things in cities going, not only do you need to use technology and data analytics to know what people want and need, but also galvanise people to internalise the objectives that we seek to achieve.
- 13 In the good old days, the classical principle of governance assumed that people are rational actors. You know what policy objectives you want, what mischief you wish to address and you apply the tools of government - laws, regulations and enforcement, incentives, taxation, moral suasion, public education, campaign drives - to get your subjects, your people to behave in a particular way to achieve certain objectives.
- 14 But that is classical, that's old-school. There are still some basics there but increasingly we see governments with the benefit of technology, the benefit of outreach, getting people involved in achieving the objectives we seek to achieve to make cities liveable and sustainable, and going beyond that, planting seeds or allowing seeds to grow - letting citizen activism help as part of the solution. And of course, at the highest level – working side by side with people to identify the problems, design the solutions and make them happen.

- 15 We saw this approach being taken in this year's Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize Laureate and the other Special Mention Cities. And this year, the City of Medellin, and the Special Mention Cities of Auckland, Sydney, Toronto and Vienna.
- 16 In Medellin, what was remarkable was the will to change, not just by the political leaders but by the people, to change and overcome the odds, the willingness to explore alternative means, and the adoption of a more inclusive and collaborative governance style to overcome urban challenges, reduce crime, reclaim the streets and improve people's quality of life.
- One such example is how Medellín has devised alternative means of generating funds, working with the publicly-owned utilities company to channel part of its annual profits to social investment projects – investing in people, and implementing catalytic projects in strategic areas where they can bring about the greatest impact.
- 17 In Auckland, the city realigned and redesigned its governance model to focus on people, to design the city to reflect the culture of its first peoples. It created one integrated council that worked on the city's urban transformation, social integration and the cohesion of its people.
- 18 Sydney has been recognised for strong leadership and its commitment to work with its people, its citizens and stakeholders to tackle urban challenges.
- 19 In dealing with the challenges of diversity, Toronto has put in place a robust system of social integration strategies and built a highly liveable city for its people.
- 20 For Vienna, it demonstrated the ability to balance urban development with its natural environment, cultural heritage and history of its people.
- 21 During this Summit, many Mayors and participants spoke about the importance of being bold and open when engaging the many problems cities are facing today.
- 21A With rapid urbanisation, climate change, terrorism, global economic volatility and much more, we as city leaders and thought leaders need to continually think out of the box for new and innovative urban solutions to tackle such challenges at the city level. Of course we should always remember the admonition by Dr Liu earlier - remember and never forget the fundamentals and basics of governance. This includes exploring how we can better utilise technology, forge new forms of partnerships, and work hand in hand with the relevant communities.

Focusing on Both the Soft and Hard Aspects of the City's Identity

- 22 As we focus on the hardware of urban planning, the softer aspects of our city's identity should also not be neglected. We don't want cookie-cutter solutions that strip your city of all that is special about it. That is why this year, for the first time, we will be having a "culture" thematic session at the World Cities Summit later this afternoon.
- 23 In Singapore, we recognise the importance of building a common national identity, while respecting the need for different cultures within our community to embrace and to celebrate their own identities and co-exist peacefully.
- 24 This has influenced how we design our multiracial housing estates, our hawker food centres, our secular schools and our places of worship in close proximity to each other.
- 25 Singapore also continues to keep up with collaborative efforts to design and implement innovative urban solutions. This way we can reap greater benefits in our individual attempts to develop a sustainable and liveable city.
- 26 One such effort is the way we try to organise our R&D. Under the Research and Innovation Enterprise (RIE) 2020 Plan that plans investments in R&D to lay the foundation of Singapore's Future Economy, the Ministry of National Development (MND) and the National Research Foundation (NRF) lead the Urban Solutions and Sustainability (USS) Domain of this entire effort. The vision of creating a "Green City, Best Home", this multi-agency team aims to develop integrated R&D solutions across the energy, water and land domains, and is one of our efforts to coordinate strategies across government agencies and the private and people sector to improve our liveability and sustainability.

Continuing the Conversation

- 27 All our cities are going to face increasing challenges in our development journey.
- 28 But we should see them as opportunities for us to continue to improve, innovate and better ourselves as we strive towards the common goal of building more liveable and sustainable cities. Let us continue our conversations between this Summit and the next, and I look forward to more insights and experiences being shared at next year's Mayors Forum in Suzhou, China as well as the 2018 Summit back here in Singapore.

29 To facilitate communication and share the knowledge amongst all the participants of the summit, our Secretariat will be sending you the reports of the various proceedings. For those who prefer to communicate online, there are online platforms such as the WCS and Young Leaders Facebook pages, and of course, our Twitter account.

30 As we prepare for future summits, please also provide your feedback, ideas and suggestions to help us improve and better customise them to your needs and the needs of your cities.

Conclusion

31 In conclusion, I thank all of you for attending the World Cities Summit and contributing to its success. I would also like to thank our organising committee, as well as the sponsors for supporting this event.

32 Thank you once again, and for all our delegates who have come from afar, I wish you all a safe journey home.