

**OPENING REMARKS BY SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, LEE YI SHYAN, AT THE WORLD
CITIES SUMMIT MAYORS FORUM 2014, 1 JUNE 2014, 9.00AM,
SINGAPORE**

Excellencies

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcome and introduction

1. A very warm welcome to the 5th annual World Cities Summit (WCS) Mayors Forum.
2. Since its inauguration in Singapore in 2010, this Forum has now become one of the largest and most important gatherings of the world's mayors and city leaders. We have seen a continuous increase in the participation over the past years. The intent, when we first started hosting the forum was to hold it every two years but due to the very good feedback received, it was decided that this should be an annual event. Today, we have here over 130 mayors and city leaders from all over the world representing all stages of city development and experiences.

3. More importantly is the quality of the forum. This is a unique forum where real urban practitioners come together to discuss real urban challenges and solutions. Key takeaways of past forums have touched on issues like strengthening alliances between public and private sectors to address infrastructure needs, harnessing the power of community through social media, developing strategies on social cohesion, and instilling a sense of pride and belonging among people for sustainable environment management.

4. With such a good representation, I am confident that we will pick up from the great diversity of discussions ideas that we may not have thought about before for our own use and applications.

Recap of 2013 Forum

5. The 2013 Mayors Forum was held for the first time outside of Singapore, in Bilbao. Let us remember the late Mayor Iñaki Azkuna who has recently left us. We remember how warmly he hosted us when we were in Bilbao. Mayor Azkuna had played a key role in the reinvention of Bilbao from an industrial city to the vibrant knowledge and cultural hub it is today. We will remember his leadership and legacy. We have lost a great leader and friend.

6. We discussed many issues at the last Forum in Bilbao. We touched on the subject of economic stimulation, job creation, workers migration, housing excess and urban rejuvenation to social cohesion in the context of a diverse European region. Clearly, Europe stands out as a region with many old but charming historical cities, advanced economies with long history of industrialisation and cultural traditions but also in some instances, in need of renaissances. Europe as a whole is still trying to recover from recession while grappling with structural reform in their economies. The lessons we learnt from Bilbao were certainly valuable and instructive.

2014 Mayors Forum

7. Today we are back in Asia. According to the Asian Development Bank, Asia will account for half of the world economic output by 2050. Its urban population will double from 1.6 billion to 3 billion. This is a diverse region that is badly in need of good infrastructure, housing and clean water and it is a region that is often challenged with continual construction and environmental degradation. The theme for this year's Forum, ***'Liveable and Sustainable Cities: Common Challenges, Shared Solutions'*** is therefore most

appropriate as it focuses on the issues as much as the promises of effective solutions.

8. I hope in our deliberations we can learn from the more advanced cities how they had overcome some of the problems Asia is facing now. For the common challenges that we all face, it is a good time to share our different approaches and plans. We will be listening to six reference case studies reflecting challenges and opportunities in urbanisation in various regions or developmental stages.
9. Our deliberations will also be further enhanced by two other presentations: the first one from the *Singapore Sustainability Symposium (S3)* held in January 2014 and the second, the *inaugural World Cities Summit Young Leaders Symposium* which took place here yesterday. These two presentations will share new perspectives, provocative solutions and potential new scenarios for urban liveability.
10. Following tradition, we will also participate in the various topical roundtable discussions which, from past experience, are the well-liked highlights of this Forum. Mayors and city leaders will present their experiences which range from promoting vibrant city life, managing water and waste, driving investments, balancing

stakeholders' interests, and fostering good governance to developing smart cities.

Singapore's urban experience

11. We too will share Singapore's own urban development experience in these discussions. You would know that Singapore was a fledgling nation struggling with urban slums, poor infrastructure, lack of sanitation, high unemployment and an unskilled labour force in the 1950s and 60s. Today, Singapore is a global city with a vibrant city life; and we are continuing to do more to promote vibrancy.

12. In the area of water and waste management, much has been done to promote a clean and healthy living environment. Singapore's approach towards development has never been one that says 'development first and clean up later'. Being aware of our size and resource limitations, we are mindful to protect as much of our environment as possible from the onset. The cleaning up of the Singapore River is a good example of our efforts in water management. With the Singapore River cleaned up, it allowed us to have a reservoir in the heart of the city – the Marina Barrage.

We have also invested in critical environmental infrastructure such as sewage and waste disposal or incineration facilities to ensure that our waste is properly managed and the environment is not polluted. Another focus area in our environmental management efforts is the promotion of greenery and the development of Singapore as 'City in a Garden'. There have been challenges along the way but we have persevered in our environmental sustainability efforts.

13. Promoting a competitive economy has always been a priority for us. From the beginning, we recognised that to achieve economic security and be self-sustaining, Singapore needed a competitive economy that was able to attract investments and provide jobs for our people. To this end, we are still enhancing our competitive advantage to drive investments, create further opportunities for future growth and ensure economic sustainability.
14. As society evolves and becomes more diverse, we need to continue to strengthen our social fabric and ensure social sustainability. Continual efforts need to be put in to promote multi-racial harmony and assimilate new citizens with the mainstream of the society.

15. Fostering good governance cannot do without integrated long-term planning; and both are key operating principles for Singapore's successful urban transformation.
16. Lastly, in the area of developing intelligent or smart cities, I just spoke about it a few days ago in Singapore's parliament. The information revolution and Big Data have the potential to transform urban living. They can be used to develop and promote innovative urban solutions in the areas of transport, healthcare, education, hospitality, and more. An example is our GrabTaxi app which matches demand and supply for taxis over the 3G network. Through it, commuters can benefit as they are able to book taxis from not just one but all companies and enjoy a higher probability of booking. Ultimately, we hope to leverage data to enhance quality of life for our people.
17. These insights or salient discussion outcomes shared at the various topical roundtable discussions will then be carried over for discussion at the Plenary Session where we will discuss a breadth of issues from a leadership perspective, including facilitating stakeholder collaboration and rallying of resources to enhance urban liveability and sustainability.

SDG on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements

18. We have also specially invited Dr Aisa Kacyira Kirabo, Deputy Executive Director of the UN-Habitat, to give a presentation. You would have received a letter from me addressed to the United Nations Open Working Group to call for a standalone Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements. Dr Kacyira will share with us more about this, and why it is important for us to do so.

Conclusion

19. As you can see, we have quite an ambitious agenda for today's forum but one which I believe will yield enriching discussion and good insights. The various strands of discussion all point to the desire in each and every one of us to want to make our cities better and more liveable for our people. On this note, I wish you a very fruitful discussion.
20. Thank you.