

**SINGAPORE’S RESPONSE TO THE REQUEST FOR INPUT FOR REPORTING BY THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ON “PREPARATIONS FOR AND OBSERVANCE OF THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY” PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION 76/139 OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

1. Singapore requests that the Secretary-General in his report reflect Singapore’s activities in support of the preparations for the thirtieth anniversary of the international Year of the Family, as follows:
  - (a) Family-oriented efforts in support of managing the use of new technologies, including harnessing new technologies to improve work-life harmony and promote parenting education;

Singapore’s response:

New technologies have become deeply embedded in everyday life for families in Singapore. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance and viability of leveraging technologies to support work-life harmony and the effective delivery of programmes and services to support families. These are gains that Singapore intends to entrench for the long-term.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many employers leveraged technology and redesigned their job processes to adopt flexible work arrangements (FWAs) such as work-from-home and staggered hours arrangements. In addition to ensuring business continuity and building workforce resilience, FWAs are also crucial in supporting work-life harmony, including family aspirations and responsibilities. As such, the Singapore government will work with tripartite partners, comprising employers and employee unions, to sustain FWAs as a permanent feature of workplaces. This includes introducing guidelines by 2024 to require employers to consider FWA requests fairly and properly. In the meantime, Singapore will continue to boost voluntary adoption of the Tripartite Standard on FWAs, which sets out best practices on FWA implementation. To galvanise significant adoption of FWAs, the Singapore government will also work with tripartite partners to provide resources and support to help employers overcome the barriers in implementing and sustaining FWAs. For instance, the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) and tripartite partners conduct training to build the capabilities of employers and HR practitioners. TAFEP will also continue growing the community of Work-Life Ambassadors – comprising employers, employees, HR professionals and community

stakeholders – to advocate for and promulgate best practices on supporting work-life harmony.

Second, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of digital means to deliver a range of services and programmes to more families. We will entrench this digital pivot in the long-term. For example, the Singapore government has successfully delivered online parenting programmes (e.g., Triple P online, KidSTART Support Groups) during COVID-19. Building on this momentum, Singapore has also launched *Families for Life Parenting* – an information portal that consolidates evidence-based resources on topics ranging from pregnancy to child health, behaviour, and language development to help parents-to-be and parents with young children raise healthy and resilient children. To enable our seniors to stay connected to their loved ones, as well as the broader community, we are also enhancing digital readiness of seniors through improving access, literacy, and participation. For example, seniors are encouraged to visit the SG Digital Community Hubs located island-wide to pick up basic digital skills, such as using chat programmes like WhatsApp, through the *Seniors Go Digital* programme put together by the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA).

Beyond supporting work-life harmony and the delivery of services and programmes to more families, Singapore also has harnessed technology to support families across different life stages and needs. Examples include LifeSG, which is a one-stop platform with mobile and web applications for families at key milestones in life. LifeSG makes it easier for families to find and use government services, such as registering their child's birth online, finding preschools, as well as serving needs such as early intervention programmes, and using the Family Support Calculator to identify benefits they are eligible for. Another key example is the *SupportGoWhere* online portal, a one-stop site that consolidates information on support schemes and services across various domains, including those related to financial support, health, medical concerns, children, and youth matters. This helps families and persons in need find the information they need easily. Lower-income families and individuals can also apply for temporary financial assistance via the portal.

- (b) Family-oriented policies and programmes that promote inclusive urbanisation, access to affordable housing, intergenerational living arrangements and other measures;

Singapore's response:

Singapore is committed to building an inclusive urban environment where families can access affordable housing, intergenerational living arrangements, and enjoy public spaces that enhances the well-being of all generations.

First, the Singapore government provides significant subsidies to ensure that home ownership is attainable for families. Currently, about four out of five Singaporean households live in affordable, quality public housing, of which about 90% own their homes. Lower to upper-middle income households may also qualify for further assistance under the Enhanced Central Provident Fund Housing Grant (EHG). Eligible first-time home buyers can enjoy up to \$80,000 or up to \$160,000 of housing grants when they buy either a new or resale flat respectively.

Second, Singapore promotes intergenerational living arrangements to strengthen mutual care and support within families through multi-generational flats and priority schemes. For example, 3Gen flats enable multi-generational families to live under one roof. Priority in public housing is also given to families who wish to live with or near their parents or married children via the Married Child Priority Scheme and Multi-Generation Priority Scheme. Eligible buyers who purchase a resale flat to live with/near their parents or child may also receive a Proximity Housing Grant of up to \$30,000.

Third, Singapore is committed to building inclusive infrastructure that is accessible for all families with varying needs, as well as designing public spaces where different generations can interact and feel part of a larger community. For example, Singapore strives to ensure that key essentials (such as food, groceries, sports, recreation, healthcare, and services) are within 400m walking distance of residents. This makes it more convenient for the residents, especially for families with elderly or families with young children. Public housing developments incorporate universal design features such as barrier-free routes that seamlessly link up blocks, major activity nodes and amenities. The Building and Construction Authority requires all new and existing buildings undergoing major addition and alteration works to comply with the Code on Accessibility in the Built Environment. The Code stipulates essential

accessibility provisions that should be included across various building types, such as ramps/lifts and accessible toilets. It also includes requirements for elderly-friendly and family-friendly features for specific building types, such as lactation rooms, accessible changing rooms, and accessible parking lots. Such inclusive design principles are also incorporated in new parks and parks undergoing redevelopment, where features such as senior-friendly community garden planter boxes and accessible shelters and parking are incorporated to facilitate inter-generational bonding among families. Singapore's Land Transport Masterplan 2040 also outlines our commitment to provide a land transport system that is more inclusive to families across different life stages. For example, to make it more convenient for families traveling with young children, stroller restraints have been installed on all public buses. To assist families of commuters with dementia, our MRT stations and bus interchanges will be progressively listed as Dementia Go-To Points by end 2022. In addition to family-friendly urbanisation, Singapore also co-locates social, community and healthcare facilities (e.g., community centres, sports facilities, childcare centres, nursing homes, polyclinics) where compatible, to help promote intergenerational interactions. For instance, there are 13 Senior Care Centres, which provide day care and rehabilitation services for seniors, co-located with childcare centres as of December 2021.

- (c) Strategies and programmes promoting orderly migration, including family reunification policies;

Singapore's response:

Singapore facilitates family reunification through entry and stay in Singapore to the fullest extent possible in accordance with our laws. In assessing applications for long-term immigration facilities, familial ties with Singapore citizens and Permanent Residents are taken into consideration, among other factors. However, family reunification is not possible in every case, especially in cases that are contrary to the public interest or where the parent's violent behaviour poses a safety risk to the child.

- (d) Family-oriented policies in response to current demographic trends including ageing, such as support for all generations in the family, including older persons;

Singapore's response:

Singapore provides holistic support for families so that they can better care for their ageing loved ones. The Ministry of Health (MOH) has expanded the capacity and range of eldercare services over the years to better meet the care needs of seniors. This includes home and day care services for seniors who are frail, and the Eldercare Centre service, which serves as the main point of contact for all seniors in every community and provides active ageing, befriending, and information and referral services. In 2019, MOH also launched the Caregiver Support Action Plan to further support caregivers of seniors, in areas such as caregiving respite services, workplace support, care navigation, financial support, and caregiver empowerment & training. The White Paper for Singapore Women's Development builds on these efforts to further recognise and empower caregivers, men, and women alike. For example, the Home Caregiving Grant will be enhanced from S\$200 per month to up to S\$400 per month to further reduce caregiving costs for those with permanent moderate disability. The Singapore government also introduced the Pioneer and Merdeka Generation Packages to make healthcare more affordable for specific groups of Singaporean seniors born in the 1950s or earlier who had fewer opportunities and lower wages to save up for their healthcare needs.

The Singapore government also promotes the strengthening of mutual care and support within families – whether by encouraging intergenerational living arrangements (see [b] above) or by strengthening intergenerational relationships. Our schools instil in our students an early appreciation for the importance of family, including respect, care, and concern for ageing members, for instance, via the Character and Citizenship Education curriculum and participation in community service. This helps families strengthen intergenerational bonds early, laying the foundation for strong intergenerational care in the future.

- (e) Measures promoting sustainable management of climate change benefiting families;

Singapore's response:

The Singapore Green Plan 2030 was launched in 2021 to catalyse a nationwide sustainability movement, to move towards a greener future. The mitigation and adaptation measures not only prepare households to adapt to a changing climate and a low carbon future, but also have other social, health and economic benefits.

For example, under the City in Nature vision, we are enhancing and extending our natural capital island-wide, through four key moves: a) expanding our nature park network; b) intensifying nature in our gardens and parks; c) integrating nature into our built environment; and d) strengthening connectivity between green spaces. By doing so, we will build up our carbon sinks and strengthen our climate resilience, and also create a green, livable, and sustainable home for all Singaporeans.

As part of the Sustainable Living pillar, we are greening our commutes by expanding our rail network, purchasing only cleaner-energy public buses, expanding cycling networks, repurposing roads, and implementing pedestrianisation where possible. These policies improve transport accessibility and safety for families.

Under the Energy Reset pillar, we are also supporting households to purchase more climate friendly appliances. Under the Climate Friendly Households Programme launched in 2020, eligible households will receive vouchers to subsidise the purchase of energy-efficient refrigerators, LED lights and water-efficient shower fittings. Each household can benefit from around S\$40 to S\$120 in utility savings annually if they make the switch to climate-friendly appliances. We are also enabling households to make more informed purchasing decisions. Singapore introduced mandatory energy labels on energy-intensive household appliances to enable households to compare the energy efficiency of the various appliances.

Singapore also launched a FamilyTrees initiative this year, whereby families were invited to commemorate the birth of their new-borns by planting a tree. This marks a milestone in partnering families to create a

greener, more sustainable Singapore together, as a lasting legacy for their children. As of June 2022, more than 170 families have participated in the FamilyTrees initiative, and it will be an ongoing initiative available for families with new-born babies, even after 2022.

- (f) Ways and means to observe the thirtieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, which may include national, regional, and international meetings, awareness raising events and other initiatives.

Singapore's response:

Singapore has dedicated 2022 as the Year of Celebrating Singapore Families. Led by Families for Life Council<sup>1</sup> with support from the Alliance for Action to Strengthen Marriages and Family Relationships, this is a whole-of-society movement which encourages the people, and the public and private sectors to jointly celebrate their families and nurture a family-friendly ecosystem.

In support of the Year of Celebrating Singapore Families, Singapore celebrated National Family Week to kickstart the June school holidays. About 25,000 families participated in the week-long celebration. An exciting line-up of events and promotions including a family carnival with fun-filled activities and performances was curated for this celebration. Families were also invited to sign up for marriage, parenting programmes and volunteering with Families for Life. The week-long event also introduced families to a new mascot, Becky Bunny, who visited the communities to raise awareness on a set of newly launched resources that teaches families about the importance of practising the core family values of love, care, concern, commitment, and respect at home.

Singapore is also putting together a plan that will showcase our whole of society vision and commitment to nurturing and celebrating families at every stage of life. The plan will bring together key family-related policies and programs from across government, community, and wider society that families can look forward in the near term. Engagements with families as well as stakeholders from the community, faith and

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<sup>1</sup> Families for Life Council is a people-sector council comprising volunteers from the people and private sectors. It spearheads the Families for Life movement which rallies individuals, families, and organisations to build strong resilient families and strengthen family bonds through large-scale events, national celebrations, and online digital campaign.

corporate sectors are ongoing and their insights will be incorporated into this plan. The plan is scheduled to be unveiled in November 2022.

Towards the end of the year, Singapore will launch a new family zone at Gardens by the Bay. This is a family-focused space within one of Singapore's most iconic national landmarks, thus sending a strong signal of Singapore's commitment to prioritise families and make Singapore a great place for families.

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