



**PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**STATEMENT BY MR. MARK NEO, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES OF
SINGAPORE TO THE UN, INTRODUCING DRAFT RESOLUTION
"SANITATION FOR ALL", ON 24 APRIL 2013**

Mr President,

I have the privilege to introduce under agenda item 14 draft resolution A/67/L.75 entitled "Sanitation for All" which designates 19 November as World Toilet Day in the context of Sanitation for All.

I am sure there will be laughter among the press and the public when it is reported that the UN is declaring a World Toilet Day, and initiated by Singapore no less! But the amusement at our expense is well worth it if after keeping a lid on their jokes, the world's media goes on to report and the general public goes on to learn that 2.5 billion people still do not have proper sanitation, that 1.1 billion people still defecate in the open, and that ending open defecation will lead to a 35% reduction of diarrhoea, which results in over 750,000 deaths of children under five years of age every year. That is to say, in the three minutes it takes me to deliver this statement, four children under five years of age will die of diarrhoea.

The media and the public will learn that without safe and private toilets women and girls face the threat of violence when they go out of their homes to relieve themselves, and that girls are reluctant to attend school if there are no proper toilet facilities. They will also learn that every dollar spent on sanitation brings five dollars and fifty cents in return by keeping people healthy and productive, that poor sanitation costs countries 0.5 to 7 percent of their GDP, and that the economic gains globally from investing in sanitation amounts to about 260 billion US dollars per year.

So their laughter is welcome, especially if they recognise the prevailing and unhealthy taboo that prevents an open and serious discussion of the problems of sanitation and toilets globally. We need to first seize the world's attention, through humour and a catchy phrase like World Toilet Day, before we can inform and educate.

Mr President,

Small states like Singapore know that if you want to change the world today, instead of many years or decades later, you have to start small. You have to find a pivotal issue, like toilets, which by focusing all your attention and efforts on you can achieve many disproportionate and positive outcomes in terms of health, gender equality, economic prosperity and the personal dignity of millions of the poorest people. In this regard, we see toilets as the gateway to the broader challenge of sanitation in all its upstream and downstream aspects. That is why the draft resolution also encourages all Member States and stakeholders to approach the sanitation issue in a much broader context and to encompass all its aspects. This is also in line with the Secretary-General's appeal to Member States to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the Deputy Secretary-General's recent Call to Action on Sanitation.

Mr President,

I would like take a moment to explain how Singapore became involved with toilets and sanitation. It was largely due to a Singaporean social entrepreneur, Mr Jack Sim, the founder of the World Toilet Organisation. Mr Sim, also proudly know as "Mr Toilet", established the World Toilet Organisation in 2001 to provide a global network for toilet associations and others involved in the toilet and sanitation sector. It now has 534 members from 86 countries. At the non-governmental level, World Toilet Day is already celebrated in many countries. Conceptually, Mr Sim's solutions to the toilet problem appeal to us. Among other things, he pioneered the "SaniShop" a self-sustaining market-based initiative which empowers local communities to build and sell single-pit latrines to their community members. It is this kind of sustainable, market-based and bottom-of-the-pyramid approach to

solving global development challenges that Singapore is happy to advocate at the inter-governmental level.

Mr President,

Through this simple draft resolution before the General Assembly today, we will have an international platform to shine a spotlight, to collaborate on special events and to develop further synergies on the issues of toilets and sanitation. We hope that this initiative to commemorate World Toilet Day in the context of Sanitation for All on 19 November will be taken up at the local, national, regional and international levels by all stakeholders in a manner appropriate to their priorities, needs and particular circumstances.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all Member States for their constructive participation and support during the open and transparent consultations. Their many suggestions, proposals and interventions made the draft resolution more robust and helped to accommodate the interests of different participants. We are deeply grateful to the more than 100 sponsors of the draft resolution, many of whom signed on early trusting in Singapore's stewardship of the negotiations. The cross-regional sponsorship underscores the universal recognition of the need to act on the pressing global challenge of toilets and sanitation. In that spirit, the sponsors respectfully call on all Member States to support the draft resolution.

Thank you

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