



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

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**STATEMENT BY MRS. NATALIE Y. MORRIS-SHARMA, COUNSELLOR,
PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
ON AGENDA ITEM 82, ON THE RULE OF LAW AT THE NATIONAL AND
INTERNATIONAL LEVELS, SIXTH COMMITTEE, 9 OCTOBER 2014**

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1. Mr. Chairman, as this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor in this Committee, allow me to join others who have spoken before me this week in congratulating you and the members of the bureau on your deserving elections. My delegation assures you of our full cooperation and support for the work of the Committee.
2. Singapore associates itself with the statement of the Lao Democratic Republic on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The Singapore delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report on this agenda item, contained in document A/69/181. The United Nations is involved in a broad range of work through its entities that are members of the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group, and the work and efforts of the United Nations and its entities in this regard deserve our due recognition and appreciation.
3. Singapore welcomes the opportunity to discuss the rule of law at the national and international levels. The theme for this year's discussion is "Sharing States' national practices in strengthening the rule of law through access to justice".

4. The rule of law has been and will continue to be a cornerstone of Singapore's stability. At the international level, Singapore is of the firm belief that the rule of law is a critical basis for international relations among states, and between states and other international legal entities. At the national level, the rule of law is the bedrock on which the nation of Singapore was founded and continues to provide the framework for its proper functioning.

5. A strong rule of law has been key to Singapore's nation building and progress as a democratic society anchored on justice and equality. We thus supported a standalone goal on the rule of law in the post-2015 development agenda. In May this year, a Rule of Law Symposium was held in Singapore on the theme "The Importance of the Rule of Law in Promoting Development". The objective was to explore how different components of the rule law, such as legal certainty, equal application of the law and access to justice, influence economic progress, social development and political stability.

6. There is no simple or universally agreed definition for the rule of law. Nevertheless, my delegation sees the importance in seeking to at least identify the common elements of what the rule of law means to all of us. With our eye on this year's theme, my delegation would like to highlight three key components of access to justice that have helped to strengthen the rule of law in Singapore.

7. First, non-discrimination. Under Singapore's Constitution, all persons are equal before the law and are entitled to the equal protection of the law. This means that everyone has equal access to the legal system in Singapore to seek redress for grievances. No one is denied access to the courts on grounds such as religion, race, descent or place of birth. It also means that no one is above the law. The law applies in equal measure to the Government as it does to everyone else.

8. Second, an effective and well-functioning legal system. In the words of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew in 1962, "the acid test of any legal system is not the greatness or grandeur of

its ideal concepts, but whether in fact it is able to produce order and justice in the relationships between man and man and between man and the state.” The independence of our judiciary is enshrined under our written Constitution. We have an incorrupt and competent judiciary which administers the laws fairly and impartially, without fear or favour. Our courts are well-known for their efficiency, recognising full well that justice delayed is justice denied. In the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Report 2013-2014, Singapore was ranked first out of 148 countries in terms of efficiency of its legal framework in settling disputes.

9. Third, fair and predictable laws. Legislation is enacted in Singapore by a democratically elected Parliament that is representative of Singapore’s multi-racial, multilingual and multi-religious society. Our laws uphold both individual and public interests. We keep them updated to meet Singapore’s changing needs. However, having such laws on the books is not good enough. Laws must be made accessible to the people, which is what we have done. Riding on the benefits of infocomm technology, all legislation is publicly available on a 24/7 basis. We have also embarked on a new project called PLUS or “Plain Laws Understandable by Singaporeans” to improve accessibility to Singapore’s written laws. The objective of PLUS is to ensure that laws are drafted and presented in a manner which is clear, readable and more easily understood by the people to whom the laws apply.

10. Mr. Chairman, Singapore is committed to the rule of law as a universal value. It must also be approached and applied in a way which recognises local contexts and practical realities to achieve good governance and to promote the general welfare of the people. We are committed to continually improving our system and look forward to the exchange of views on this agenda item over these two days, including on the Secretary-General’s recommendations for developing further the linkages between the rule of law and the three inter-linked and mutually reinforcing pillars of peace and security, human rights and development.

11. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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