

**SPEECH BY MR BAEY YAM KENG, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT,
AT THE SEC SCHOOL GREEN AWARDS 2023**

Ms Isabella Loh, Chairman, Singapore Environment Council

Mr Ho Tong Yen, Chief Executive Officer, Keppel Care Foundation

Distinguished guests, teachers, students, ladies and gentlemen,

A very good afternoon to all. It is my pleasure joining you at today's awards presentation to recognise our schools' efforts in environmental sustainability.

The urgent need to accelerate climate action

2 A recent report by the United Nations highlighted that the world is not on track to cap global warming at 1.5 degrees under the 2015 Paris Agreement, even though many countries have set decarbonisation targets. To avoid the worse impacts of climate change, global greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced by 43 per cent by 2030. This means that all countries, including Singapore, need to act decisively within this decade to ensure that this goal remains within our reach. We only have seven more years to reach the target.

3 As a small, low-lying island state, Singapore is vulnerable to rising sea levels and extreme weather events brought about by climate change. In May, Singapore

experienced the highest recorded temperature of 37 degree Celsius in the last 40 years, in line with the World Meteorological Organisation's projection that this year will be the hottest year on record for our Earth.

Charting our path to net zero

4 Singapore is doing our utmost to accelerate our green transition. We have raised our national climate ambition to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, and our national sustainability roadmap, the Singapore Green Plan 2030, positions us to achieve this goal. The Green Plan outlines some of our key targets to reduce our emissions, and strategies to help our people adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Let me share some examples:

- a. We will quadruple solar energy deployment by 2025 and import green electricity from the region and beyond. This will support our transition to renewable energy sources.
 - i. About 70 per cent of our schools are on board the SolarNova programme, where solar panels will be progressively installed on school rooftops.
- b. We have implemented measures to mitigate urban heat and strengthen community resilience to heat.

- i. In July, we launched the Heat Stress Advisory to provide simple tips to minimise the risk of heat stress and heat-related illnesses for prolonged outdoor activities. So if teachers tell you to stay indoors and under shelter in the heat of the day, you know it's for your own good. We want our people to be protected from the heat.

- c. Our 30 by 30 vision aims to build our capability and capacity to produce 30 per cent of our nutritional needs locally, and sustainably, by 2030.
 - i. I am heartened to know that some of our schools here today have set up small urban farms to educate students on food security.

5 While Singapore lays the roadmap towards net zero through the Green Plan, we need the support of all segments of our society to realise our ambition. Businesses must transition towards low-carbon operations and incorporate sustainability in key processes. Individuals will need to adopt sustainable habits, such as bringing reusable bags for groceries, recycling right, and choosing to buy only what you need.

Nurturing environmental stewards in our schools

6 Our schools play a unique role in imbuing sustainability as a core value amongst our students. Schools serve as 'greenhouses' that provide a nurturing environment to shape the values and habits of young people. Through environmental

education, our schools enable students to gain knowledge and skills in sustainability, and lead projects that benefit their peers and communities.

7 The School Green Awards is a meaningful platform to recognise our schools' achievements in environmental sustainability, and contributions towards the Green Plan. Over 300 schools participated in this year's Awards, demonstrating that more schools are introducing environmental initiatives for our students. I'd like to share some inspiring projects:

- a. APSN Chaoyang School's initiatives show that our students with special needs can also play a part to encourage others to go green. The school set up a booth at Cheng San Community Club to share about its sustainability efforts with more than 400 residents, and advocated for green habits through activities such as designing recycling bins using recycled materials.

- b. The 'We Love Food' initiative by CHIJ Our Lady Queen of Peace aims to close the food waste loop in the school with its Black Soldier Fly compound and vermicompost corners. Students from its Environmental Science Club are also making bioplastic from food-grade ingredients to pack small quantities of snacks, which can be broken down by vermicompost worms after use so that every waste is recycled. The school also participated in the Singapore Youth Science Fair exhibition, to raise awareness on innovative ways to tackle food and packaging waste.

- c. In Pasir Ris Crest Secondary School, Secondary 1 and 2 students harvested 63 kilogrammes of vegetables from their school's urban farm, which uses a solar-powered auto-irrigation system. The vegetables are given to 60 seniors at Pasir Ris East Community Club. Through this process, students learn about food security and energy conservation.

Building a culture of environmental stewardship

8 These projects, along with many others initiated by your schools, are inspiring because they demonstrate our students' efforts to encourage sustainable living, and passion to leave a positive impact on our community. I encourage all of you to think about the next initiative or project that you can start to benefit communities around you. You can also consider expanding an existing initiative within your school. Scale it up to reach more people and advance greater advocacy.

- a. If you require seed funding for your community projects, you can tap on the \$50 million SG Eco Fund administered by my Ministry.
- b. To date, we have awarded \$9 million to a total of 195 projects, including projects by some of our primary and secondary schools. I encourage you to apply for the SG Eco Fund so that we can see more of such community projects on sustainability, driven by you.

9 Let me conclude by congratulating all the winners here today. Thank you to all participants for your commendable efforts in this year's awards. I also thank SEC and

Keppel Care Foundation, for your dedication in promoting environmental advocacy among our schools and students.

10 Together, our collective efforts can build a culture of environmental stewardship and drive positive impact in our community. Thank you.