

**SPEECH BY FS JONATHAN CHEN ON HOW SINGAPORE CAN  
CONTRIBUTE TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
ARCTIC, AT THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERT COUNCIL ON  
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- It is my pleasure to address you today at this meeting of the International Expert Council on Cooperation in the Arctic. I would like to thank Director General of the Center for Strategic Assessments and Forecasts Sergei Griniaev for giving me the opportunity to speak at this event. My speech today is based on an article written by Singapore's Deputy Secretary for Foreign Affairs Simon Wong that was published in the World Wide Fund for Nature's quarterly on the Arctic called the Circle. The article is entitled "One Degree North".
- The Arctic is an increasingly important region not just for the Arctic States, but also for the whole world. In the face of a changing environment wrought by climate change, the sustainable development of the Arctic is of utmost importance. As a small tropical country one degree north of the Equator, Singapore has neither territorial nor resource claims in the Arctic region. However, developments in the Arctic will have a profound and direct impact on our survival. Let me elaborate on why this is the case:

- First, given that Singapore is a small low-lying island state, the melting of the Arctic sea-ice could significantly raise global sea-levels, and change weather patterns which could pose serious challenges for Singapore. Geographical distance is not a factor when it comes to the global effects of climate change, and what happens in the Arctic could have serious repercussions on equatorial countries. We are already seeing more flash floods and droughts in Singapore.
- Second, Singapore is a trading nation and we are highly dependent on maritime routes. The growing viability of the Northern Sea Route could offer us new trade routes which we can ply. In addition, Singapore believes in a rules-based international legal framework for Arctic shipping, based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Such international rules can help ensure safe and responsible shipping. Therefore, Singapore supports the establishment of the Polar Code by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to regulate safe and clean shipping in polar waters.
- To this end, Singapore had applied for observership in the Arctic Council in 2011, and was one of six countries granted observer status at

the Kiruna Ministerial Meeting in Sweden on 15 May 2013. As an observer in the Arctic Council, Singapore is keen to lend our expertise to relevant areas of the Arctic Council's work, cooperate bilaterally with the Arctic States, increase our Arctic capabilities, and monitor Arctic developments which will have key implications on our survival.

- There are four key areas in which Singapore can contribute to the Arctic's sustainable development. First, Singapore can contribute to the development of a safe Arctic region.
- The port of Singapore is situated along the Straits of Malacca, one of the most important sea lines of communication, and it receives about 120,000 vessels each year. It is one of the world's busiest ports – it transships one-seventh of the world's shipping containers, and is connected to 600 ports worldwide. The maritime sector has always been an economic necessity for Singapore due to its lack of land and natural resources. In this regard Singapore recognises the importance of maritime law and cooperation in ensuring navigational safety and the protection of the marine environment. With the opening up of the Northern Sea Route, Singapore is working with partners in the IMO on the development of a Polar Code. An international rules-based framework for Arctic shipping based on the UN Convention on the

Law of the Sea will help ensure safe and responsible polar shipping as the Arctic region develops.

- Singapore is also ready to share its knowledge of oil spill prevention and maritime traffic management with Arctic stakeholders. Singapore places strong emphasis on the safety of navigation and the security of vessels. Its advanced Vessel Traffic Information System (VTIS) ensures the safe and efficient navigation of ships, and has the ability to handle up to 10,000 vessel tracks at any one time. To this end, Singapore has participated in the meetings of the Emergency Prevention, Protection and Preparedness (EPPR) as well as the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) Working Groups, and the Task Force on Oil Pollution Prevention.
- The second area that Singapore can contribute to is sustainable development. Singapore has neither the interest nor capabilities to engage in natural resources exploration and development. However, it can provide enabling technology for Arctic development. Singapore operates the most technologically advanced and efficient rig-building, conversion, shiprepair, and specialised shipbuilding facilities in Southeast Asia. Currently, Singapore holds 65% of the world's jack-up rig-building market, and 66% of the global floating production storage

and offloading (FPSO) conversion market. A Singapore corporation, Keppel Singmarine, part of the Keppel Offshore & Marine group, was the first Asian shipyard to build icebreakers, completing two for Russian company LUKOIL in 2008. Keppel Offshore and Marine is currently collaborating with ConocoPhillips to conceptualise the world's first Arctic-grade, environmentally-friendly "green" rig, bearing in mind the importance of protecting the fragile Arctic environment.

- Singapore also recognises the importance of Arctic research to the sustainable development of the region. To strengthen Singapore's Arctic capabilities, the National University of Singapore (NUS) has set up an Arctic Affairs Programme. The programme comprises an Arctic research fellowship on Arctic legal issues (under the NUS Centre for International Law), as well as a study by the NUS Centre for Maritime Studies on trans-Arctic shipping routes.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> area that Singapore can contribute to is environmental protection. Singapore lies on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (or EAAF), a major flight path for migratory waterbirds. Sites like the Sungei Buloh Wetlands Reserve and other protected sites in Singapore serve as important stops for Arctic migratory birds during the northern

winter. The migratory birds of the EAAF are threatened by habitat loss and overharvesting, and conservation efforts are essential to ensure their survival. To this end, Singapore's National Parks Board (NParks for short) has been actively involved in the EAAF Partnership and also the Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative (or AMBI), under the umbrella of the Conservation of Arctic Flora and Fauna Working Group. In particular, Singapore aims to develop a plan under the AMBI for co-operation on Arctic migratory bird conservation in the Southeast Asian region. NParks is also working with the Arctic Council and other partners to track Arctic waterbirds' migratory habits along the EAAF. This is part of Singapore's efforts towards implementing the agreements in IUCN World Conservation Congress Resolution 28, 'Conservation of the EAAF and its threatened waterbirds, with particular reference to the Yellow Sea'.

- The 4<sup>th</sup> area that Singapore can contribute to is the development of human capital. Singapore recognises the need to engage the indigenous peoples of the Arctic region, who are most affected by the changing Arctic landscape. Singapore's Special Envoy for Arctic Affairs, Ambassador Tony Siddique, visited several Arctic capitals to better understand the concerns and needs of the indigenous peoples. Through

these visits, Singapore has gained a deeper appreciation of the Arctic, and we hope to use our newfound knowledge to contribute more effectively to the region.

- In June 2012, Singapore took the first step in organising a week-long custom study visit for representatives of Arctic indigenous communities. The participants visited Singapore and were shown various aspects of Singapore's governance, such as urban planning, port management, and water recycling. The visits were well-received, and a second study visit to Singapore for the Arctic Council Permanent Participants is planned for late 2014. I am pleased to note that Mr Grigory Ledkov's office has confirmed that he will be participating in this visit.
- Singapore also recognises the importance of preserving the local knowledge and heritage of the Arctic communities. One way this is demonstrated is through the Singaporean company Thornton Media which has developed Apple and Android indigenous language applications to preserve indigenous languages that are quickly disappearing. Thus far, they have covered a wide range of American indigenous languages, such as Inuvialuktun and Gwich'in, and it is

hoped that the application will cover indigenous languages of other Arctic peoples.

- To conclude, I would like to state that the Arctic Council is in a unique position to play a leading role in managing the integration of different stakeholders and interested parties in the Arctic. As a “little red dot” close to the Equator, Singapore does not pose any threat to the strategic interests of Arctic Council member states and the indigenous peoples. Rather, Singapore has real and substantive interests in the Arctic and, as an observer, can make positive contributions to the Arctic Council’s work. An inclusive approach towards observers will not only benefit the sovereign Arctic states and indigenous peoples, but also ensure that non-Arctic countries with extensive experience and knowledge can better contribute to the future of the Arctic region.
- I thank you for your attention.

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