

## **SPEECH BY DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER WONG KAN SENG AT THE SINGAPORE DAY DINNER IN LONDON ON 25 APRIL 2009, AT HAMPTON COURT PALACE**

Distinguished Guests,  
Fellow Singaporeans,  
A very good evening to all of you.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Today's Singapore Day in London is the third in the series since it began in 2007. The first two were held in New York and Melbourne. I am told that the final count for the number of attendees today was about 12,000. This brings a grand total of about 30,000 Singaporeans and their families who have participated in the three Singapore Days organised thus far! Singapore Day has become an annual signature event in the OSU calendar. It brings together a large number of Overseas Singaporeans in one place so that they can foster fellowship and camaraderie, and stay engaged with home.

2. Unlike the last two years, Singapore Day this year is held against the backdrop of a global economic downturn. Many of you present would be concerned about the situation back in Singapore. MTI has recently revised downward the GDP forecast for 2009 from -6% to -9%. This is the worst recession that Singapore is facing since independence.

3. The Government has put in place a \$20.5 billion Resilience Package to help Singaporeans and businesses ride out this economic crisis. Measures include the Jobs Credit Scheme to keep Singaporean workers employed, the Skills Programme for Upgrading & Resilience (SPUR) to help Singaporeans upgrade their skills, special risk-sharing initiatives (SRI) to stimulate bank lending, reduced corporate taxes and increased financial assistance for Singaporean families in need. While times are tough, we should not despair. Years of prudent fiscal management and accumulation of surpluses during the good times have helped us to build up our reserves for the rainy day. Because of this, we did not have to borrow to fund our Resilience Package. When the world economy starts to recover, we will be able to better position ourselves to emerge faster and stronger.

4. Despite the economic downturn, Singapore remains the place to be in. On 18 March 2009, an article in the Forbes Magazine placed Singapore fourth in its list of 127 "Best Countries for Business". Our healthy budgets and high personal wealth accumulated over the years have helped to insulate Singapore from the volatility in the financial markets. As people are our only resource, we invested heavily in education. Our people have become better educated. On 17 February 2009, the Guardian reported that Singaporean children are consistently in the top four for Maths, Science and Literacy due to our education system that provides

for a “rare combination of traditional teaching and discipline, and a holistic child-based approach”. Singapore has built up a good reputation internationally. This brand name is something that all Singaporeans can be proud of, not just Singaporeans who are in Singapore, but Singaporeans who are living, working and studying overseas as well.

## **SINGAPORE DAY 2009**

5. In spite of the economic downturn, our efforts to reach out to Overseas Singaporeans will continue. Irrespective of the economic situation, we will not neglect Overseas Singaporeans as they are part of the larger Singapore family.

6. I am heartened that many of our partners from the private, public and people sectors continue to support this event. The list is long, as you can see from the panel of partners behind me. Let me name a few – **Eric Khoo**, Creative Director for the entire event; Official Partners **Singapore Airlines** and **Neptune Orient Lines** for ferrying the entire team and materials up; Strategic Partners **Makansutra**, **Singapore Food Industries** and **MediaCorp** for bringing the food and show here; Principal Partners **Tote Board**, **Goodwood Park** and **Royal Garden Hotel** for their sponsorship. Not to forget, the **hawkers** and **chefs** who have worked tirelessly since this morning and the performing artistes who made us smile and laugh, the **J-Team**, **Broadway Beng**, **Mr Brown**, **The Dim Sum Dollies** and **Hossan Leong**, **Rui-En** and **Taufik**. Some of them will be performing here later. I also wish to thank our emcees **Adrian Pang** and **Michelle Chong**. Last but not least, I want to thank the more than 200 Overseas Singaporean volunteers, for helping the OSU with a variety of tasks, ranging from back-stage work to performances in the morning, e.g. the group called **Acapella Ini** – a band of seven Singaporean students studying in London. Thank you as well to **Fontane Liang**, **Grace Lee** and **Melvin Tan** who are performing tonight.

7. I congratulate the many community leaders and Presidents of the various Overseas Singaporean associations, many of whom are present tonight, for having done a good job reaching out to Overseas Singaporeans and helping with the organisation of the Singapore Day event. You have played an important role in fostering a closely-knit Singaporean community here.

8. In this global economic downturn, it is important that Singaporeans overseas stay united and connected to home. We have faced many challenges in Singapore’s short history and as long as we stand united, whether in Singapore or abroad, we will overcome the crisis, as we have done before.

9. I wish you all a wonderful evening. Thank you.