

**OPENING REMARKS BY
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SINGAPORE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AND
OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AT GENEVA
AMBASSADOR FOO KOK JWEE
AT THE REVIEW OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE
AT THE 24TH SESSION OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW
WORKING GROUP MEETING, 27 JANUARY 2016,
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

Mr President,
Honourable Council members,
Distinguished representatives of Observer States,
Members of civil society,
Fellow Ambassadors and dear colleagues

A very good afternoon to all of you.

Since this is the first time I am taking the floor, let me first extend my delegation's warmest congratulations to Ambassador Choi Kyonglim on your election as President of the Human Rights Council.

My delegation has full confidence that you will serve this important role with distinction.

Mr President,

Singapore supports the UPR process. It provides a framework for all States, big or small, to have a conversation on their human rights achievements and challenges, on equal terms.

Singapore is committed to the UPR process. The strength of our delegation here today – comprising senior officials and experts from 11 ministries and agencies – is testament to that commitment

Mr President,

We seek to build a nation where our citizens can lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, in a fair and inclusive society.

We believe the UPR is another tool to help us achieve this goal

by allowing us to listen to others' views, take stock of our progress, and engage our citizens and civil society on the way forward,

to better care for and protect the human rights of Singaporeans.

In our first UPR in 2011, Singapore supported in whole or in part 84 of 112 recommendations.

We have an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights that tracks and reviews the implementation of these recommendations, and coordinates cross-cutting human rights issues.

We have consulted our citizens and civil society widely. In 2012, we conducted a year-long open consultation exercise involving some 50,000 citizens – known as “Our Singapore Conversation” – to engage citizens from all walks of life on their hopes, concerns and vision for the future.

We had also conducted two dedicated rounds of consultations with civil society organisations to seek their views for our second UPR review.

But the UPR process is not just about reviewing how well each State had done.

It is also an opportunity for States to share their best practices and experiences in the promotion and protection of the rights of their citizens.

In our presentation today, we will report on a number of areas we had worked on in the past few years to provide better social protection to our citizens,

while strengthening our inclusiveness and social harmony.

In doing so, we hope to also share how we have managed, and still need to constantly manage, the enduring challenges of dealing with primordial and visceral forces of race, language and religion in our diverse society,

while trying to overcome our current development and social challenges

in a world buffeted by tectonic forces such as geostrategic shifts, game-changing technological advances, climate change, and terrorism, just to name a few..

This entails constantly seeking a dynamic balance between different segments of our society and dealing with pressures to privilege one group over others.

Mr President,

Let me also take this opportunity to say a few words to introduce our Leader of Delegation, Ambassador-at-Large Chan Heng Chee.

I am delighted that Ambassador Chan is with us today.

Ambassador Chan began her distinguished career as a political scientist, but she became one of our finest and most decorated diplomats.

She served as our Permanent Representative to the UN from 1989 to 1991 and our Ambassador to the United States for 16 years from 1996 to 2012.

She has a strong humanitarian and human rights background too. She was the first Executive Director of the Singapore International Foundation – the Singapore version of the Peace Corps –

and was Singapore's representative to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) for the past 3 years (from 2012 to 2015).

Ambassador Chan is currently Chairperson of the Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities, Chairperson of the National Arts Council and a Member of the Presidential Council for Minority Rights.

Mr President, I would now like to invite Ambassador Chan to outline Singapore's philosophy and approach to the promotion and protection of the human rights of our citizens.

I thank you Mr President.