**MHA’s Intervention on Law and Order for**

**Singapore’s 3rd Universal Periodic Review**

**12 May 2021**

Mdm President,

My name is Lin Qinghui, and I am the Senior Director of the Policy Development Division at the Ministry of Home Affairs. I will speak more about Singapore’s approach towards law and order.

**Singapore’s Law and Order Approach**

We place great emphasis on ensuring the fundamental human right to safety and security. As a result, Singapore is one of the safest places in the world. Our crime rate is low, and we have consistently topped international polls in the area of law and order.[[1]](#footnote-1)

These achievements have been secured by design, not by chance.

Singapore’s approach towards law and order is underpinned by our adherence to the rule of law, a robust criminal justice system with tough laws and enforcement, and effective rehabilitation of ex-offenders. We have professional and impartial law enforcement agencies, and an independent judiciary. These institutions command a high level of trust from Singaporeans.

**Capital Punishment**

I would like to address the comments and questions raised by Belgium, Liechtenstein, Panama, …[List States]… regarding the death penalty.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The death penalty is an important component of Singapore’s criminal justice system. It is applied only after due process of law and with judicial safeguards. In our experience, it has been an effective deterrent against the most serious crimes such as murder and drug-trafficking.

A study conducted by us in 2018 found that drug traffickers who were more aware of the penalties for trafficking had reduced the amount of drugs they trafficked into Singapore.

This deterrent effect was also observed in other serious offences. Firearm offences, for instance, declined immediately by 39% when the death penalty took effect in 1974. Kidnapping fell sharply from an average of 29 cases per year between 1958 and 1960, to just one case in 1961 when the death penalty was introduced for this offence. Both offences are now rare in Singapore.

**Corporal Punishment**

[List States] spoke about our use of corporal punishment.

Judicially imposed corporal punishment in Singapore is prescribed under our law. It is meted out for serious crimes such as sexual and violent offences, and is governed by strict legal, judicial and medical safeguards. For instance, caning is only permitted for men who are age 50 or younger, and who have been certified medically fit to undergo the punishment.

Judicially imposed corporal punishment does not violate international law. It also does not amount to torture, or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Like the death penalty, corporal punishment has had a deterrent effect against serious crimes.

**Preventive Detention**

[List States]… and the US spoke about our Internal Security Act and Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Act.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Preventive detention is used in exceptional circumstances in Singapore to counter serious threats to national security and public order. Recently, it was relied on to thwart potential extremist attacks against Singapore’s Muslim and Jewish communities.

Preventive detention in Singapore is provided for by law. It is not arbitrarily invoked, and is governed by robust safeguards to protect the rights of detainees.

Detainees are informed of the grounds of their detention, and are not held in secret. They have access to legal counsel and can make representations against their detention. Detention orders are reviewed by independent committees chaired by Supreme Court judges. Where an independent committee recommends the release of a detainee, the person cannot be further detained without concurrence of the President of Singapore. Detentions are reviewed at least once a year.

**Conclusion**

Mdm President, in such debates, the right of all individuals to live in safety and security is often overlooked. This right, however, is foremost in Singapore’s approach towards law and order, as we see it as a core responsibility of governments.

This approach has worked well for our people. Singaporeans today are able to live in peace and harmony, in large part because of a safe and secure environment undergirded by sound laws. We will continue to balance competing rights, but always with the interests of the larger society in mind.

Thank you.

1. The Gallup Global Law and Order Report 2020 ranked Singapore first on public perceptions of law and order for the seventh consecutive year. Singapore also came up top in the area of “Order and Security” under the World Justice Project’s latest Rule of Law Index 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Belgium, Liechtenstein, and Panama raised advance questions/recommendations on the abolition of the death penalty. Australia, Ireland, Latvia, Mexico, Paraguay, and Slovenia separately indicated to MFA their intention to speak about the issue during their respective interventions, so we should look out for them. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The US raised an advance question on the use of the ISA and CLTPA. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)