

Speech by Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean at the National Climate Change Competition 2015 Prize Award Ceremony on 20 November 2015

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Teachers and students.

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICES TO HELP COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

Introduction

Congratulations to the winners of this year's National Climate Change Competition, and thank you to all our participants. Your creative short videos help fellow Singaporeans to know more about the impact of climate change, and the choices we can make to reduce our carbon footprint.

Global Agreement on Climate Change

The climate change challenge requires all of us to do our part. There are many things each of us can do in our daily lives to reduce the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere which damage the Earth's environment, and are harmful to everyone in the long term. Many of the things we can do, we ought to do anyway, such as using energy efficient appliances or switching them off when not in use. These cost us nothing, and will in fact result in savings for ourselves. Some steps may involve some sacrifice or a little inconvenience – such as sorting the things we throw away for recycling, or choosing not to use products that cause serious environmental harm when they are being produced. This is why the theme for this year's competition "Our Climate Our Choice" is a good reminder that we need to make the right choices, to jointly tackle this global challenge.

Countries around the world, including Singapore, will gather in Paris next month to seek to finalise a new global agreement that will cover greenhouse gas emissions from all countries after 2020. This is an improvement from the current Kyoto Protocol, which governs only emissions from developed countries. If we are able to reach a new global agreement, it would be the first time that all signatories to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have committed to undertake actions to address climate change. The target is for the collective actions of all countries to help limit global temperature rise to no more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels by 2100.

Singapore's Role as a Responsible Global Citizen

In Singapore, this little island of ours is all we have, and it is our responsibility to make sure that it is a clean, green and healthy place for us to live in, and to pass this on to our children. Therefore, from the 1960s, well before climate change even entered the international spotlight, we have

chosen to emphasise sustainable development based on energy efficiency and avoiding pollution. We have done so in spite of, and because of, the many constraints we face as a small city-state.

While we have few alternative energy options to using fossil fuels for power generation, we have chosen the cleanest and most efficient means available to us – using natural gas, even though it costs far more than coal and fuel oil. Unlike many countries, we choose not to subsidise energy in Singapore, so that industry and households will consume energy judiciously.

We also made difficult choices in the transport sector. We successfully implemented the world's first urban traffic congestion pricing scheme in the 1970s. We seek to reduce car usage and emissions through a package of measures including quotas for new cars, significant fuel taxes, and a 'fee-bate' scheme to incentivise the use of vehicles with lower carbon emissions. We invest heavily in public transport, and aim for 75% of all peak hour journeys to use public transport by 2030. Last year, public transport mode share was at 66%.

These were early and decisive measures to support sustainable development. We made these difficult choices because we believe they are the right things to do – for ourselves, and for the world. So that Singaporeans can commute conveniently, and not fume away in endless traffic jams. So that Singaporeans can enjoy a clean and green living environment. So that we can have fresh air all year round, and do not ourselves pollute the air that we breathe. So that we do not create environmental problems for other countries and the world.

Indeed, our early actions have allowed Singapore to achieve one of the lowest greenhouse Emissions Intensities in the world ¹. And even though we only account for 0.11% of global emissions, we will continue to do our part as a responsible global citizen. In July, Singapore submitted our new climate pledge to the UNFCCC. We committed to reduce our Emissions Intensity further, by 36% from 2005 levels by 2030. We will also stabilise our greenhouse gas emissions and aim to peak around 2030. This is an ambitious target given that we have already taken many measures early, to achieve our current low emissions intensity level.

A Role for Everyone: Our Climate, Our Choice

Tackling the climate challenge is not something that Government can do on its own. It is heartening that Singaporeans have shown support for our measures to tackle climate change. From January to May this year, the Singapore Government conducted a series of public consultations on ways to reduce carbon emissions in the post-2020 period, and received more than 1000 comments and suggestions. Many participants said that we could use energy more efficiently, and that each of us can play a part, for example by reducing our carbon footprint or helping to raise awareness of climate change.

All of us can and must translate these intentions into action by making the right choices. For example, by switching off home appliances, such as TV set-top boxes and electric water heaters, when not in use. By choosing appliances with better energy performance standards. By choosing to use public transport or car-pool.

As many of you have pointed out in your videos, we can all support the climate cause through our daily actions. By making the right choices, we can all play a part to build a more climate-friendly Singapore. I am sure all of our participants have learnt more about climate change through making

your videos. Your videos will, in turn, help to raise awareness about this important subject among your friends and fellow Singaporeans, and motivate them to make the right choices in support of the climate change challenge.

Once again, congratulations to all our winners. Thank you.

¹ According to the IEA Key World Energy Statistics 2014, Singapore's emissions intensity is ranked 113th out of 140 countries^[1] globally, i.e. among the best 20% of countries.