

WELCOME ADDRESS AT THE OPENING OF iGOV GLOBAL EXCHANGE 2009 BY MR PETER HO, HEAD, CIVIL SERVICE AND PERMANENT SECRETARY (FOREIGN AFFAIRS)

“Integrating Public Services, Engaging Citizens”

Mr Goh Chok Tong, Senior Minister,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to the inaugural iGov Global Exchange 2009. This international event brings together leaders, policy-makers, experts and practitioners from both the public and private sectors around the world to share and exchange strategies and best practices in e-Government. We are indeed most privileged to have as our Guest of Honour, Senior Minister, Mr Goh Chok Tong, to grace this morning’s Opening Ceremony and deliver the Keynote Address.

2. The theme of the iGov Global Exchange is “Integrating Public Services, Engaging Citizens”. e-Government, or the use of information and communication technologies to facilitate the administration of Government, is today, an essential strategy for delivering quality Government services to the public through integrating processes across organisational boundaries.

3. Today, access to the World Wide Web is a way of life. The huge success of Web 2.0 applications such as blogs, Youtube, Facebook, and Twitter has demonstrated the power of the Internet to connect people across countries and continents. Governments around the world cannot ignore this phenomenon, especially the Internet's ability to connect and engage the so-called Y or Net Generation constituents. There is much that the Net Generation, with its affinity for mobility and social networking, can contribute to active citizenry and shaping public policies. Governments must therefore keep pace with these social and technological changes as well as heightened customer expectations, even as they continually leverage on technology to integrate Public Services and engage their citizens.

4. As a small city-state with no natural resources, Singapore's constant challenge is to find ways to overcome our limitations. In this regard, we began to tap the power of information technology almost thirty years ago. We started off our e-Government journey in 1980 with the launch of the Civil Service Computerisation Programme, or CSCP in short. CSCP was instrumental in automating the back-end government processes and building the underlying infrastructure which enabled us to move quickly

in providing government e-services when the Internet became pervasive in the 1990s.

5. Under our first e-Government Action Plan, all public services which could be delivered online were made available as e-services in a one-stop portal, for the convenience of all Singaporeans. We then moved from front-end integration to backend integration, hence the term integrated Government or iGov for our current Masterplan. This involves streamlining and re-designing processes within and across government agencies. With a good mix of technology and service transformation, our e-Government strategies and implementation have contributed significantly to building Public Service excellence and enhancing our national competitiveness.

6. Throughout our e-Government journey, Singapore has learnt much from other countries, as well as from best practices in both public and private sectors. This iGov Global Exchange is organized to bring together experts and practitioners from different parts of the world to share experience and exchange ideas. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our speakers and guests for taking the time to participate in this Exchange. Many of you have travelled a long way to be with us today.

7. There are a number of activities lined up over the next four days as part of this Exchange. At this morning's forum, we will hear from a distinguished line-up of speakers who will help us look into the future, while learning from the experience and lessons of the past.

8. This afternoon, three separate tracks have been organised to allow for more in-depth discussions. The first track on the topic of the "Net Generation and Government" discusses the issues, challenges and strategies for engaging the Net Generation. The second track on "Integrating e-Government Services Across Multiple Government Agencies" is for government officials to examine how they can work to meet the expectations of citizens today – citizens who expect public services to be delivered seamlessly through a single point of contact. The third track discusses the issues of "Strategic Sourcing for e-Government Services". With the complexity and speed of change in technology today, governments have to work with strategic partners, including those from industry, to facilitate the implementation of e-Government services.

9. There will also be an exhibition and site visits that showcase examples of e-Government solutions in action. I encourage you to visit the exhibition and a site or two, where you can experience first-hand and have

meaningful discussions with the people who were involved in planning or implementing the various successful e-Government systems.

10. There is much for us to share and discuss in the area of e-Government. I hope that you will find the exchange of ideas to be useful and thought-provoking, and that you will leave here with new insights and ideas that you can apply. I wish you a stimulating time at the various iGov Global Exchange activities over the course of this week, and to all our overseas visitors, a very pleasant stay in Singapore.

Thank you.

.....