

**World Cities Summit Mayors Forum 2012**  
**Theme: “Liveable and Sustainable Cities”**

**Chairperson’s Opening Remarks By Mr. Lee Yi Shyan**  
**Minister of State for National Development and Trade & Industry,**  
**Singapore on 1st July 2012 (Sunday), Marina Bay Sands, 9.00am**

Warm Welcome

1. First of all, let me warmly welcome you to Singapore and also to the 3rd edition of our annual Mayors Forum. In fact, we are honoured to have with us here today, former Minister for National Development, Mr Mah Bow Tan, who first mooted the idea of having a Mayors Forum.
2. This year, more than 100 mayors and leaders from Africa, East Asia, Southeast Asia, Europe, North and South America are participating in this forum. The growing size of this forum is a reflection of the relevance and usefulness of this platform in enabling exchange of views and learning of best practices. It also shows that the diversity of experiences represented here are valuable, even though our cities may be at different stages of development.

**Shared Interest In Cities**

3. Two years ago when we gathered here, the world was recovering from a financial crisis. Today as we gather here, we face the prospect of a fragile economic outlook, with European sovereign debt crisis and a slowing G3 economy as amongst the main concerns.
4. A favourable global environment will be good for our cities’ development. Conversely, an unfavourable global economy will add uncertainties to local developments. In some instances, it can even slow down our development plans and require us to respond or to modify our execution.

5. Nevertheless, many of the challenges we face in building better cities are long term in nature. As the saying goes: “Rome is not built overnight”, neither is Singapore nor any cities represented here. Focusing on the medium to long term policies and planning is therefore crucial to the pursuit of sustainable development.
6. Speaking of cities’ sustainable development, I am also conscious of the fact that the 100 cities represented here are diverse in size, demographics, history and stages of development. Despite our differences, I am quite certain that our collective experiences would still offer unique and new insights into better approaches and solutions as we build our future cities and cities’ future.

## **Key Urban Challenges**

### *Emergence of Mega Cities*

7. Rapid urbanization will see the world’s population concentrating in cities. By 2025, the UN forecasts that there will be 37 megacities (defined as a metropolitan area with a total population of more than 10 million) accounting for 13.6 per cent of the world’s urban population. More than half the world’s population already live in cities and the number will swell to almost 5 billion by 2030. And 2030 is not very far away, especially if we consider the kind of environmental pressures which will be added to our cities by the day, and the long lead time needed for adequate infrastructure to be put in place.

### *Inadequate Basic Urban Services*

8. It is no wonder that worldwide; 828 million people live in slum conditions, lacking basic services such as drinking water and sanitation. This number is increasing by 6 million each year to hit a total of 889 million by 2020. In many cities, we are trying to catch up with adequate infrastructure. We are behind the curve.

### *High Urban Poverty Level*

9. The pressure on growing cities is not limited to public hygiene and sanitation. Poverty and lack of employment are other key challenges. For instance, almost 25% of Asia's urban population is poor and the rate has been increasing as a result of rural-urban migration.

### *Environmental Degradation*

10. In short, growing cities face many challenges, including a whole host of issues related to environmental degradation due to our inability to manage water pollution, waste disposal and excessive carbon emission. All these, added together, present a set of grave challenges against our vision of better cities and better lives.

### **Key Outcomes**

11. It is with this backdrop that we have chosen the theme “Liveable and Sustainable Cities” for this Forum. I hope we are even more inspired and determined to rise to the challenges. As leaders of our respective cities, we can make best use of this peer-to-peer platform to discuss candidly our challenges, aspirations and most important of all, to seek out practical solutions that we can bring back to help transform our cities.
12. To help us delve deep into the various functional aspects of sustainable development in cities, we have added 6 breakout sessions following this plenary. This is so that we can develop enough depth in defining, in the words of governors and mayors, the 6 elements of a sustainable development: (i) High Quality of Life, (ii) Competitive Economy, (iii) Sustainable Environment, (iv) Integrated Master Planning and Development, (v) Dynamic Urban Governance and (vi) Building Liveable Cities.

13. It is my plan to capture the insights and perspectives gleaned from this morning's discussions in a post-meeting report, serving as a useful context to various discussions taking place at the World Cities Summit. In this way, we can establish some of the critical success factors leading to the theme of this forum "Liveable and Sustainable Cities".

### **Conclusion**

14. Finally, let me thank you once again for your presence and participation. I look forward to interacting with you in the rest of the forum proceedings. Fellow mayors, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to declare the 3rd Mayors Forum open.

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