

CLOSING REMARKS BY SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, MR LEE YI SHYAN, AT THE WORLD CITIES SUMMIT CLOSING PLENARY, 3 JUNE 2014, SINGAPORE

Excellencies

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

2014 World Cities Summit's Participation

1. In this year's World Cities Summit, we have seen an unprecedented participation of over 1200 delegates, including over 130 Mayors & 30 Ministers, heads of IOs/NGOs and business leaders. If we include participants in the CleanEnviro Summit and the Water Week, we have more than 20,000.
2. Impressive as the numbers are, I think I can speak for all participants that we are more interested in the qualitative aspect of the summit. We are interested in the takeaways. We want to bring back best practices and practical solutions we can implement at homes. We want simple and cost effective ways to deal with the challenges we encounter in our cities.

Lessons Learnt

3. Our deliberations in the Summit are wide-ranging. But I have found our studies of the two Lee Kuan Yew Prize Winners as well as the Special Mention cities instructive. The usefulness lies in the fact that they represent cities at different stages of development. They have different priorities, attempt to solve different problems and yet they have one common goal of creating a sustainable and livable city.

4. We learnt how **Orange County Water District** painstakingly prepared its constituents to accept recycled water and through ingenious membrane solutions, the city arrived at cost-effective water sufficiency.

5. We are amazed by the determination of **Medellin** in turning crime-laden streets into institute of higher learning, combining parks with libraries to create community spaces for safe social interactions and replacing high homicide rates with job opportunities.

6. We studied the best practices of **Yokohama** in creating family-friendly amenities such as childcare and job opportunities to attract young families. We see a microcosm of a cosmopolitan Japan where foreigners and new ideas are welcomed.

7. We are awed by **Suzhou**'s transformation, all within a short span of 20 years, to become a harmonious and integrated township celebrating both modern economic achievements and the rich heritage of an ancient city of 2,500 years.

Mayors Forum

8. While these are definitely four worthy highlights in the World Cities Summit, our discussions at the Mayors Forum held earlier, also gave me the impression that we have very real and pressing fundamental problems on hand to resolve.

9. For the 130 or more mayors and city leaders who are present, having access to technical solutions and functional options are not good enough. To set their cities on the path of sustainable development, the

city leaders have to figure out better ways of making their voices heard in the national and international arena; of securing the necessary financial resources at the federal level to do what is needed at the municipal level, and of galvanising the ground to support long term sustainable development goals that go beyond multiple election cycles for realisation. Sustainable development requires determination as much as discipline.

Results from Polls – Challenges Remain

10. From the various polls conducted before or after every session over the past two days, it is not totally obvious that we, the participants are confident that we will achieve our sustainable and livability targets anytime soon.

11. For instance, one poll showed that 29% of the participants deemed that the world would never have 100% potable water accessibility even beyond 2050. In another poll, 42% of the participants felt that the world would never be able to achieve the vision of a city without

slums and homeless people. Are we too pessimistic or is this a reflection of current reality?

12. At the Mayors Forum, Dr Kacyira of UN-Habitat cautioned that there were one billion people who still lived in slums or in slum-like conditions. Many cities are grappling with housing, sanitation, transport and social inequality issues. For many cities, liveability means going back to basic.

Politics and Leadership

13. As leaders of cities, it is important that we exercise effective leadership and keep politics honest. So say our Minister Khaw Boon Wan. Along our efforts to make our cities better places, we need to be as honest and transparent as we can about what we can do, and what we cannot.
14. Of course, if there are stumbling blocks along our way, we will need to persevere and exercise effective leadership to remove them.

15. I would like to highlight that the practice of effective leadership in a fast changing, digitised and globalised world has become much more complex. Rising expectations from the public, ready access to information, amongst others, are changing the shape and texture of public-people sector interactions. Hence the subject of “citizen engagement in the context of a smart city”.

Smart City Initiatives

16. Fortunately, a digitised society can also present itself a ready platform for active citizenry and citizen engagement.

17. In the presentations we just heard, cities which invest in IT infrastructure, educational and training capacity to raise IT literacy, the adoption of Open Data and deployment of various “intelligent systems” can actually harness public opinions and promote the co-ownership of problems, and co-creation of solutions.

18. In such instances, the government need not be the sole solution provider, and neither can it, because there is potential for greater creative capacity in the people and private sector in devising solutions to help city residents deal with day-to-day problems such as mobility, safety, learning, healthcare and municipal services.

Continuing the Conversation

19. Ladies and gentlemen, there are just too many unfinished tasks at hand. Even before we meet again in June 2015 in New York for the Mayors Forum, we should continue this conversation.

20. You may be pleased to know that there are ways to keep in touch with each other. For instance, the World Cities Summit Secretariat will soon send you the reports of the various proceedings. For those who prefer to communicate online, we have our online platforms such as the Mayors Blog, World Cities Summit Young Leaders Facebook page and even a Twitter account.

21. As we endeavor to render our City people-centered, we should also make Mayors Forum 2015 and World Cities Summit 2016 highly customised to your needs. Please keep your ideas and suggestions coming. I therefore welcome you to connect with me directly on my Facebook page or email me. The World Cities Summit and the Mayors Forum are yours.

Conclusion

22. In conclusion, let me thank all the good people in the organising committees for organising this terrific gathering. I would like to thank all sponsors for supporting this event generously. Finally, let me thank all of you, for contributing your time, passion and wisdom to make this event a great success.

23. Thank you.