UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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STATEMENT BY

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PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

IN THE GENERAL DEBATE

OF THE FIRST COMMITTEE

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Mr Chairman,

1 Please allow me to join other speakers in congratulating you and your bureau members on your election. We assure you that our delegation will give you the fullest support in ensuring a smooth and productive session. We would also like to extend our appreciation to the previous Chairman Ambassador Jarmo Sareva of Finland for his good work during the 58th session of the General Assembly.

2 We are living in some ways in the best of times, with advances in technology and the spread of globalisation bringing about many positive changes, including economic growth and higher standards of living for many countries. In some ways, this is also the worst of times, as the same driving forces are bringing about new threats and vulnerabilities which affect everyone rich or poor, strong or weak.

3 The First Committee provides a multilateral forum to deal with issues concerning international peace and security, and disarmament. Today, I would like to look at the work of the First Committee from the angle of terrorism. Singapore sees terrorism as one of the most serious threats to the world we live in. Even after the many measures undertaken by the world in the aftermath of the horrific attacks by the terrorists on September 11 2001, the world has hardly become a safer place. Recently, the world stood by helplessly as terrorists killed more than 330 in cold blood in a school in Beslan - more than half of them children. This was after the loss of hundreds of civilian lives in the terrorist attacks on the idyllic tourist resort of Bali and the bustling city of Madrid. There were also terrorist attacks elsewhere too numerous to mention. It is a certainty that we will have to live with the threat of terrorism for some time to come. The moral freefall and the lack of restraint suggest that the scale of violence inflicted by terrorism has no boundaries. The threat of terrorism is further amplified by the risk of proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). It is indeed worrying that there is growing evidence of terrorists seeking to obtain chemical, biological and radiological weapons.
Mr Chairman,

4 As a small country, the prevention of WMD proliferation is in Singapore's vital security interest. We are keenly aware of the danger posed by terrorists resorting to the use of WMD. A single chemical or biological attack will have catastrophic effect on the entire nation. A nuclear attack will also mean the physical end of Singapore. This is not theoretical or far-fetched - there is a finality in such a scenario as Singapore could be entirely wiped out in one single attack! We are determined to do everything possible to safeguard Singapore's security. In the fight against terrorism and curbing of the proliferation of WMD, Singapore has enacted the relevant laws and regulations. We have also strengthened our export control regimes. We are working towards strengthening measures against terrorism in multilateral forms such as APEC, ARF and IMO. Singapore firmly supports international efforts to counter the proliferation of WMD including the Proliferation Security Initiative as one of the practical means to keep WMD and related substances out of the hands of terrorists groups. This is in line with Singapore's forward-looking stance against WMD proliferation and against global and regional terrorism.

5 Apart from the relatively new threat of international terrorism, regional conflicts continue to ravage the lives of people in many parts of the world. Many of these conflicts are intra-state rather than inter-state in nature. They are aided by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, with thousands of lives lost every year, and many more thousands displaced from their homes. Such conflicts would inevitably lead to the destruction of viable economies, which could result in failed states and the destabilisation of the surrounding region. This is fertile breeding ground for extremism and terrorism. In this regard, Singapore supports the UN efforts in enhancing international cooperation to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

6 Singapore sees the issues of disarmament, non-proliferation and terrorism as inter-related. The UN will need to continue to be the key player on these issues, especially on disarmament and non-proliferation. In this regard, Singapore appeals to all parties to adopt a flexible position in order to resolve their differences so that real progress can be made in these areas. Singapore supports Security Council Resolution 1540 which reaffirms that proliferation of WMD is a threat to international peace and stability. We also call for the universal adherence to multilateral arms control and non-proliferation treaties.
such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention.

Mr Chairman,

7 Every year we gather here to deliberate on the agenda items of the First Committee, to find ways to move forward the things we believe in. Every year, scores of resolutions are passed to deal with the issues of great concern to us. But, at the end of the day, we will also have to ask ourselves what these resolutions have achieved other than reflecting the well-known positions of the various delegations. After all the hard work that we have put in to come out with the resolutions, have they been implemented and acted upon? Have they led to tangible results? To an outside observer, there is a perception that we are merely going through the motions year after year, with few concrete results to show.

8 The threats faced by the world are serious and need to be urgently addressed. The longer we take to tackle the issues, the higher the costs will become. There have been many calls for reform and revitalisation of the UN, including the work of the First Committee. As with most UN issues, the key ingredient to success is political will - the political will to engage in some give-and-take and to exercise greater flexibility in one's position and to have deeper understanding of other's constraints. It is heartening to see that this committee has decided to adopt many of the measures discussed in the previous session in order to improve the efficiency of the meeting. As highlighted by the Chair in his opening address a few days ago, I hope that these measures would also be as effective in helping us to come out with the foundations for a durable and comprehensive solution to the security challenges we face.

Mr Chairman,

9 The Chinese expression for crisis consists of two words "Wei Ji", that is, danger and opportunity. The Chinese believe that opportunity exists where danger lurks. Perhaps, in the dangerous world that we live in today, there also exists a golden opportunity for us to collectively shape the world in the ideals of the UN that we all cherish.

Thank you.