

**OPENING REMARKS BY MR MAH BOW TAN, MINISTER FOR
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT,
AT THE WCS MAYORS' FORUM ON 30 JUNE 2010**



Excellencies

Distinguished Guests

1. Please allow me to warmly welcome everyone especially our guests from abroad and WCS's strategic partners Asian Development Bank, UN-HABITAT and World Bank. I am pleased also to welcome you to the inaugural WCS Mayors' Forum organised by the Centre for Liveable Cities, Singapore.

Introduction

2 We are at a challenging junction in history, faced with increasing concerns of rapid urbanization, population growth, climate change and dynamic economic situations. As city leaders, you are at the frontline in creating sustainable, liveable and prosperous communities. How can we achieve this?

3 We can begin by discussing the challenges you face, sharing our experiences and best practices and learning from one another. It is therefore timely to convene this international platform. Today we have a significant gathering of over 30 Governors and Mayors from all over the world: America, China, Europe, India, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. While circumstances may differ for each city, the thrust of the WCS Mayors' Forum is relevant to cities the world over, that is to build a sustainable learning community of mayors and cities dedicated to creating liveable communities for residents.

“Leadership and Governance in Turbulent Times”

4 Cities require strong leadership to steer cities through these times and inspire confidence both locally and globally. National governments control key policies but local government leaders implement agendas at the city level. Cities and international organizations are aware of the perspectives at varying levels of administration.

5 In sub-theme 1 “Leadership and Governance in Turbulent Times” we will explore how cities can rebuild confidence in times of uncertainty and crisis¹, seize opportunities to reposition themselves, invest and leverage on the city’s development for economic gains². At the same time, mayors need to promote social cohesiveness even as the city develops, maintain equity, diversity and encourage active community participation.

“Eco-friendly and Liveable Communities”

6 Challenges present timely opportunities for cities to adopt innovative solutions in sustainable development. To sustain growth, the modern city has to go beyond providing the basic infrastructure needs for the present and look into creating eco-friendly and liveable communities in the long term. Practical concerns such as resource mobilization, financing strategies and funding mechanisms must also be addressed.

7 In sub-theme 2 “Eco-friendly and Liveable Communities”, the cities invited to share their stories are familiar names in the international platforms. We will hear how a holistic and integrated approach¹ is key to sustainable development and to balance economic, environmental and social needs. Our strategic partners, the ADB and WB will share initiatives that assist cities in bringing their plans to fruition.

“Promoting Communities of Best Practices among Cities”

8 Many cities have developed innovative solutions to mitigate some of the challenges brought about by urbanisation yet they continue to seek out solutions to resolve other challenges. Globalisation has linked the world and cities in multiple ways such as sports (and we’re in the middle of the World Cup now). How then can we leverage on global platforms such as this Forum to promote communities of best practices among cities? This will be the focus for sub-theme 3.

9 I encourage you to contribute ideas on how cities can collaborate to continue to learn together. I would like to suggest how we can do so in 3 areas. First, co-organise and participate in knowledge-sharing events like smaller scale thematic workshops. Second, jointly develop training programmes and engage in capacity building for mayors and city officials. Finally, share learning resources like case studies via a on-line learning portal or through one another’s networks. The Centre for Liveable Cities, the organizer of this Forum and co-organiser of the World Cities Summit will work with cities and strategic

partners in the 3 areas.

10 Today's forum is focused on 2 outcomes, namely to provide a high-level forum for Mayors to exchange ideas and best practices; and identify key areas for further study and collaboration. I hope that all members would take this opportunity to actively contribute ideas. Your views and ideas will help shape the development of the WCS Mayors' Forum into a global platform for sharing of best practices.

11 For a fruitful discussion, I urge members of the forum to keep your remarks brief to allow for maximum interaction and in-depth exchanges. With this, I declare the forum open.

-
1. Mayor of Al Madinah will cover such unexpected challenges in his presentation.
 2. Hainan City will focus on building itself into a tourism destination.
 3. Malmo City will share how it takes an active and holistic approach to SD and to be a 21st century eco-city.
-

Inaugural WCS Mayors' Forum Creates a Community of Best Practices in Sustainability

1 The inaugural WCS Mayors' Forum was convened successfully on 30 June 2010. Organised by the Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC), the WCS Mayors' Forum represents a key highlight of World Cities Summit 2010. Over 40 Mayors and Governors gathered at the Forum to discuss the most pressing issues faced by cities around the world today. They included representatives from Tangshan, China, Melbourne, Australia, Lagos state, Nigeria, Freiburg, Germany, and Phoenix, USA.

2 The Forum was held at an opportune time, with many global cities finding themselves at a challenging junction, where they have to mitigate economic concerns, population growth, climate change, growing needs of the community, and related issues brought forth by urbanisation. The Forum witnessed engaging discussions on the importance of good governance and leadership in guiding cities through the present, priorities for cities in the new century, and the possibilities for cities to achieve high growth while remaining eco-friendly and liveable. Delegates also discussed how global platforms such as the WCS Mayors' Forum could provide opportunities for the development of peer-to-peer learning network that explore exchanges, showcase and share knowledge and best practices to create liveable cities in a systematic way.

3 Mr. Ilmar Reepalu, Lord Mayor of Malmo (Sweden), believes the Forum is a good platform for exchanges of best practices. "The WCS Mayor's Forum is an excellent opportunity for me to exchange experiences and interesting best practise solutions with Mayors from other cities", he said.

4 Mr. Abdulaziz Bin Abdulrahman Al-Hussiyen, Mayor of Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah (Saudi Arabia), believes that such a Forum is useful to the work of Mayors and is beneficial to cities. "Participating in such an international Forum is very important to share with other Mayors challenges that Cities manage and

the different approaches in solving these challenges. This will help Cities save the cost and time,” he remarked. “That will be high standard continuing learning and training methods for Mayors. In all Cities, there are some common programs and projects. With such Forums, Mayors can share the best practices.”

5 Mr. Philip Gordon, Mayor of Phoenix City (USA) is delighted that the forum created rare opportunities for cities to network and develop economic opportunities. “I am extremely excited to come to Singapore and participate in the forum. This is a rare chance to exchange ideas with leaders from all over the world and to make business contacts that can further the City of Phoenix's economic development efforts”, said Mr. Gordon.

6 Moving forward, the Centre for Liveable Cities will partner World Bank (WB), UN-HABITAT and Asian Development Bank (ADB) to develop the WCS Mayors' Forum into a global network that promotes best practices and peer-to-peer learning among cities based on three key objectives. First, to provide a strategic platform for Mayors to converge and discuss challenges faced by cities, share lessons learnt, and deliberate possible joint solutions. Second, to facilitate the learning of best practices on leadership and governance, and to identify solutions that are practical, scaleable and replicable to build sustainable and liveable cities and foster harmonious and sustainable communities. Third, to identify key areas for further study and collaboration between Cities.

7 Ms. Fumiko Hayashi, Mayor of Yokohama City Government (Japan) has high hopes on the development of the Forum into a global peer-to-peer community of best practices. “Today, we are facing many issues that we must resolve from a global perspective, such as global warming, poverty, and disaster. It is extremely important that we overcome national borders and coordinate regional approaches when dealing with these problems. I have high hopes that this forum will become a model for inter-city collaboration towards the resolutions of these global issues”, she said.

8 Mr Robert Doyle, Lord Mayor of Melbourne, was upbeat about the contribution that the forum could contribute to the growth of cities. “In my experience, city leaders can be more ambitious, courageous and imaginative than some of their national governments. By coming together at world mayors meetings such as the WCS Mayors' Forum, much can be achieved to help ensure our cities' future health. This is precisely how city Mayors work together”, said Mr Doyle.

9 “It's important for city leaders to converge and discuss important issues arising from urbanization”, said Mr. Andrew Tan, Director of the Centre for Liveable Cities, one of the organisers of the World Cities Summit. “It is even more crucial for city leaders to mindshare best practices and identify common interest to collaborate. One of CLC's work is to facilitate the sharing of best practices and learning among cities in the region and globally through conferences, forums, seminars and workshops. The WCS Mayors' Forum is one such avenue. We are happy to see that cities are supportive to develop the WCS Mayors' Forum into a learning network of cities and delighted to partner UN-HABITAT, World Bank and ADB in this new initiative”

10 Given the strong support of the participating cities at WCS Mayors' Forum and the strategic partnership between CLC, UN-HABITAT, World Bank and ADB, the WCS Mayors' Forum is well-poised to serve as a leading global platform to network cities and promote communities of best practices.