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***We will have peace on Earth when we have peace with the Earth.***

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**The Government and People of Singapore  
 Through the Office of the Prime Minister  
 The Hon. Lee Hsien Loong  
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 Email: [pmo\\_hq@pmo.gov.sg](mailto:pmo_hq@pmo.gov.sg)  
 September 21, 2020**

**Re: Congratulations to the City in a Garden**

Dear Honorable Leaders and Good People of Singapore:

Greetings from the Normandy Chair for Peace<sup>1</sup>. Yes, we will have peace on Earth when we have peace *with* the Earth. Singapore is living proof of this basic truth.

We write to congratulate and thank you, your leaders, your people, and the National Parks Board. Together, you have created a city-state that cares, protects, and restores the Land, Air and Waters (LAW) of Life.

Decades ago, Singapore was gifted by the leadership of a good, honest, courageous, and brilliant visionary -- the legendary Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, your first Prime Minister. With the leaders of his time, he saw the physical limitations of your small city-state in terms of land, air, and waters. They saw that with such limited land, you cannot follow the western model of disastrous development. They knew that you cannot pave over all the living land with dead and hard concrete to



make more roads and more parking lots. So, they decided to set aside open spaces with the vision of a ‘Garden City.’

What makes the example of Singapore so impressive is that the initiative was carried on by the succeeding government leaders. This continuity of purpose and pathway is very rare in the world of quickly-shifting “democracies”<sup>ii</sup>. Your Ministry of National Development joined the journey of a dream for an ideal city-state. From a Garden City, you have now evolved into the City in a Garden. *Bravo!*

You – meaning your good Government and your good People – went on to plant tens of thousands of trees. You also put up hundreds of parks and community gardens. They are wonderfully linked to each other by green corridors. Through the years, you made sure that projects for road and vertical development must set aside open spaces for greenery and fresh air. The trees that your good people have planted give your citizens and visitors a wide array of subtle and strong benefits. First, those trees soften the hard feel of dead concrete. They give shade and cool the humid tropical air. They absorb rainwater and prevent flooding. They inhale heat-trapping and toxic gases, and they exhale life-giving oxygen. The Trees, the climax species of the plant kingdom, help reconnect to life the climax species of the animal kingdom – *Homo sapiens*.

Small as your land area may be, you have preserved large patches to become nature reserves and conservation conclaves. Wildlife and other life-forms are well protected in your good city-state. You even came up with the idea of a ‘Cities Biodiversity Index’. This is to measure the plant and animal lives that share the living space of human settlements. Your efforts are a powerful symbol of an acute and actioned awareness of the role of humans: That we must learn to live in peace *with* the other lives on Earth.



Nature reserves in Singapore make this small city-state a most livable city. An excellent example for other cities and countries in the world.

After all, they – the many plants and animals -- were here long before we came along.

What Singapore is doing is to show the world that we can, and must, live with the plants and animals. After all, they make this Earth the one and only planet so gifted with the extravagance of Life.

## Freshwater

In the story of freshwater, again, Singapore stands out as another lighthouse of hope. Seeing the wasted rainwater, you put up rainwater catchment ponds. You then built the infrastructure to ensure that your rainwaters drain into the reservoirs. When the British left Singapore, you only had three water reservoirs. You now have SEVENTEEN (17)!



Otters frolicking with the Singapore skyline in the background.

These water reservoirs cover a significant area of your city-state. Instead of concretizing, you have beautified their banks with native plants.

You have restored fish in your rivers and succeeded to bring back otters from the brink of extinction. They are now are part of your amazing cityscape.

No city, no state is too small for simple common sense. You are showing that you are a world leader in the recycling and reuse of 'used water'. Some dare to call it 'waste-water'. Like you, we believe that water is too precious, we must never, ever, waste it. This 'used water' in Singapore has now been transformed into the 'NEWater'. We like this new name for your recycled water!

When we change words, we change meanings. When we change meanings, we change mindsets.

## Transportation

Seeing the limited space for roads and cars, the good Singapore Government shifted its focus from a car-centric city to one that has efficient public transportation. This policy left large patches of land for open spaces – to grow greenery and your beautiful trees.

To discourage the purchase of more and more cars crowding the roads, your good Singapore Government introduced the ingenious COE - Certificate of Entitlement. People who want to buy a car must pay a hefty price to be entitled to that privilege. At the same time, you ensured that your people are provided with an excellent public transport system. You built the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system and the Light Rail Transit (LRT). And you expanded the bus network so your people can have convenient and comfortable alternatives to cars. You also started charging cars

for using the roads – from paying a road tax based on engine capacity, to the Area Licensing Scheme, and now the Electronic Road Pricing (ERP) system.



These are all laudable examples of the Polluter Pays Principle in action. This principle was first declared in the 1992 UN Conference on Environment & Development in Rio de Janeiro (Principle 16, Rio Declaration on Environment and Development).

Cars take up so much space, they discharge toxic gases into the Air that everyone breathes, and they turn land full of life into dead concrete. These are all symptoms of the many ill-impacts of a car-crazy society. Singapore seems to be the only country that has implemented this strong policy to tame these metal monsters (a.k.a. cars). These are the deadly dragons that belch out fire and poison from its *infernal* combustion engine. And yet we call it progress, development, and contribution to GDP – Great Disaster for the Planet.

The Singapore Story shows in real life how to happily fulfill the vision and mission of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- 1 - Eradicate extreme Poverty
- 2 - Good health and well-being
- 3 - Quality education
- 4 - Water and sanitation
- 9 – Innovation and infrastructure
- 11- Sustainable cities and communities
- 13- Climate Action

- 14- Life below water
- 15- Life on Land
- 16- Peace and Justice
- 17- Partnerships to achieve the goals.

## New CPR Economy

Your good country is also an excellent example of the new model of restorative economics – The CPR Economy (CPR – to Care, Protect & Restore). This is – the economic model that restores the Sources of Life of Land, Air, and Water. This is the complete opposite of the twisted model of the present economy that is heavily EX-tractive and recklessly CON-sumptive (Ex-Con). The Ex-Con Economy is that cruel kind of Economics that has raped and ravaged the vital organs of the Earth – the Land, Air, and Waters (LAW) of Life. The vital organs of Life on Earth: the trees and the forests are the heart and lungs of Life; the land and the soil are the skin and the flesh, from whence we get our food; and the sea and the rivers are the blood and bloodstreams of Life on Earth.



The Ex-Con (Extraction/ Consumption) Economy seeks to rape and ravage lands that are so full of the gift of Life. All for a few pieces of paper called money.



THE CPR Economy -- like what Singapore is doing -- seeks to care, protect, and restore the Land, Air, and Waters (LAW) of Life.  
*Bravissimo!*

Instead of destroying, the CPR Economy seeks to Care, Protect, and Restore the life-sources of Land, Air, and Waters. What Singapore is doing with your enlightened model of development is exactly what the world needs today. The Earth, with its failing vital organs, urgently needs an emergency CPR. CPR - the Cardio-

Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) of the vital organs of the Earth - the Land, Air, and Waters – the LAW of Life.

Dear fellow residents of the Earth in Singapore, your country is a lighthouse of hope in the midst of this painful pandemic. No, it is not the COVID pandemic. That virus and the damage that it is doing is nothing compared to the intensely infectious virus of vanity. This virus has caused the deadly flu of greed, abuse, and recklessness by the animal that dares to call itself wise – the *Homo sapiens*.



Your good example, dear friends in Singapore, shows the rest of us on Earth that we humans can be truly wise. We can all walk well in this wonderful world.

### **A Human Lighthouse**

May we also congratulate and thank you for one of the most distinguished citizens of the Earth, who happens to be a citizen of Singapore. He rose to the greatest heights in the global stage of International Environmental Law and Diplomacy. As Chair of a very contentious international conference, he was the sail and the wind that brought the living landmark of human cooperation -- the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

With his wit, wisdom, humor, and humility, he also successfully chaired the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. That magical event was the spring from whence gushed forth the waters of mind-shifting moments: The inspirational 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21 (Earth's Action Plan) and the Forest Principles; as well as the hard law instruments - the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Desertification and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Generations hence, the story of this 1992 conference will be told as a cheery chapter in the hopeful history of human life.

Ladies and gentlemen of the world, please all rise. Please join us to give a very big round of applause and salute to the good and the great -

## ***Professor Tommy Koh !***



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### **Social Change**

In the theory of social movements, change usually happens top-down or bottom-up. Top-down is fast, but it does not last. Bottom-up will last, but it is not fast. What you have done in Singapore is to show a third pathway -- one that is fast and yet one that will last.

This is when the top meets the bottom, and the bottom meets the top. Then both walk together in the joy and journey of a daring dream. This is also known as the “sandwich theory” of social change. Putting that theory into practice, you have engaged and inspired your people -- as they have also inspired you -- to become good Guardians of your City in a Garden!

Once again, *BRAVO!*

### **In Conclusion**

Once again, congratulations and the highest gratitude to the good people of Singapore. The splendid Story of Singapore is truly a shining example that the world must know about. Knowing your story will inspire and set many hearts on happy fire.

On behalf of grateful people around the world - of this generation and of generations yet unborn who will benefit from your vision even more -

***THANK YOU, Terima Kasih, Sieh-sieh!***

Above the Wild Waves,  
the Raging Rain,  
and the  
Clashing Clouds  
of today's  
Crisis of Life ...

is the

Golden Sun of Hope



Very truly yours,

**Nicholas Robinson**  
Executive Governor  
International Council for Environmental  
Law (ICEL)  
New York and Madrid

**Antonio Oposa Jr.**  
Normandy Chair for Peace  
Guardian of Future Generations  
Manila and Normandy

**Durwood Zaelke**  
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<sup>i</sup> Normandy Chair for Peace.

Normandy, once a symbol of war, is now a symbol of peace. On June 5, 2019, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Normandy Beach landings coincidentally the UN World Environment Day, the Normandy Chair for Peace was established. This was the product of the cooperation between the CNRS (Center for National Research of France, The University of Caen in Normandy, and the Government of the Region Normandy).



Etretat Beach in Normandy

The Chair is dedicated to the rights of future generations and to the proposition that “We will have peace on Earth when we have peace with the Earth.”

The Chair for Peace seeks good stories of people making peace with the Earth. To change today’s narrative of the negative, the Chair shines the spotlight on the positive, on the good, the right, and the bright.

“We change the story of the world when we change the storyline.”

For more information on the Normandy Chair for Peace, please visit <https://chairpeace.hypotheses.org>

<sup>ii</sup> *sic* on purpose; intentional.

Photo of Nature reserve on page 2:

<[https://www.google.com/search?q=pictures+of+nature+reserves+of+singapore&rlz=1C1CHBF\\_enPH882PH882&oq=pictures+of+nature+reserves+of+singapore&aqs=chrome..69i57.9254j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=pictures+of+nature+reserves+of+singapore&rlz=1C1CHBF_enPH882PH882&oq=pictures+of+nature+reserves+of+singapore&aqs=chrome..69i57.9254j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8)>

Photo of otters on page 3- By: Kang Yeng Thiing. Published by the Singapore Strait Times.

<<https://www.straitstimes.com/multimedia/photos/home-is-an-otter-delight-for-prize-winner>>

Public transportation picture on page 4-

<[https://www.google.com/search?q=pictures+of+public+transportation+in+singapore&rlz=1C1CHBF\\_enPH882PH882&sxsrf=ALeKk01e9bsSiW8dmEAYEeljle74Vk1Blw:1598846115182&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=Uaq6OAgroiAkM%252CiGH-rH78AJgJqM%252C\\_&vet=1&usg=AI4\\_-kR2ZiLjcEgpB4rt\\_cVE5t4Ye47kOQ&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwivu\\_v1xcTrAhVKG6YKHFvhCiQQ9QF6BAgKEBg&biw=1266&bih=593&dpr=1.5#imgsrc=Uaq6OAgroiAkM](https://www.google.com/search?q=pictures+of+public+transportation+in+singapore&rlz=1C1CHBF_enPH882PH882&sxsrf=ALeKk01e9bsSiW8dmEAYEeljle74Vk1Blw:1598846115182&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=Uaq6OAgroiAkM%252CiGH-rH78AJgJqM%252C_&vet=1&usg=AI4_-kR2ZiLjcEgpB4rt_cVE5t4Ye47kOQ&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwivu_v1xcTrAhVKG6YKHFvhCiQQ9QF6BAgKEBg&biw=1266&bih=593&dpr=1.5#imgsrc=Uaq6OAgroiAkM)>

Etreta Cliff. Source of Picture,

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