

**SPEECH BY DR AMY KHOR, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE
FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER RESOURCES,
AT SINGAPORE CHEMICAL INDUSTRY COUNCIL'S 'CLEAR SHORES, CLEAN
WATERS' COASTAL CLEAN-UP
20 SEPTEMBER 2019, EAST COAST PARK**

Mr Wim Roels, Chairman, Singapore Chemical Industry Council,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1 Good morning. First and foremost, I would like to thank the Singapore Chemical Industry Council (or SCIC) for organising this event, and to all of you for taking time out today to help clean up our coast. I am told that this is SCIC's third coastal clean-up this year. It coincides with the International Coastal Beach Clean-up Day, and is a good reminder that we are part of a meaningful global movement to protect our environment.

Marine Pollution

2 According to the UN Environment's 2016 report on marine plastic debris and microplastics, Singapore is one of the smallest contributors to marine plastic pollution in the world. This is largely because we incinerate our plastic waste safely at our waste-to-energy plants before they are landfilled as ash. Many of our rivers have been dammed up into reservoirs for water supply. For those that continue to flow into the sea, waterway clean-up measures prevent litter, including plastic waste, from reaching the sea. At our anchorages, garbage is collected from ships and disposed of safely. These efforts collectively ensure that waters in and around Singapore meet international water quality standards and are safe sources of water supply and places of recreation.

3 Even so, you can see from your efforts this morning that there is still plastic pollution on our shores. Some of this may not have originated from Singapore. Nevertheless, today is a good opportunity for me to share what the Government has done to encourage the responsible use of plastics.

Greater Accountability for Waste

4 Earlier this month, we passed the Resource Sustainability Bill in Parliament. This landmark legislation will allow us to mandate key responsibilities to enable reuse and recycling. One of the key waste streams addressed by the Bill is packaging waste, including plastics.

5 We generate large amounts of this — almost a third of total domestic waste disposed of in Singapore. We can and should do more to reduce the amount of packaging waste used and disposed. There is opportunity for us to do more to recycle packaging also.

6 To tackle this, as a start, we will require businesses such as brand owners, importers and large retailers, including supermarkets, to collect data on the types and amounts of packaging they place on the market, and submit plans to reduce, reuse and/or recycle packaging waste. This will kick in from next year.

7 This should spur companies to reduce the amount of packaging they use, and the amount of packaging waste they dispose. It will also lay the foundation for an Extended Producer Responsibility framework for managing packaging waste, including plastics. The National Environment Agency (or NEA) is currently studying this framework, and is targeting to have it in place by 2025.

8 We are also keen to work with Singaporeans to co-create solutions to tackle the excessive use of single-use plastics. Tomorrow, we will be convening a Citizens' Workgroup to look at how we can improve households' recycling habits. Next year, we plan to set up another Citizens' Workgroup to look at how we can collectively tackle the issue of excessive consumption of single-use plastics.

Importance of collective action

9 Reducing packaging waste and other types of waste will contribute towards our efforts to tackle climate change and protect our environment. This will be a massive undertaking, and not something Government can do alone. We need everyone to play a part.

10 I am therefore heartened by efforts such as today's initiative. The SCIC represents Singapore's chemical industry and larger chemical companies, such as refineries and petrochemical companies. NEA has been working closely with the SCIC in areas such as pollution control, energy efficiency, and carbon mitigation. The NEA also meets with the SCIC periodically to discuss environmental issues and regulation. This coastal clean-up is an excellent initiative by the industry to take ownership of packaging and plastic waste that they could be contributing to.

11 Today's coastal clean-up is also a meaningful way to educate the public on the need to use and dispose of plastics responsibly. Organisations like the SCIC have the power to pool resources, and leverage their networks to influence the behaviour of the public for the better. I believe that over time, such cumulative efforts will bear fruit.

Conclusion

12 Let me conclude. The key to reducing waste is to avoid the excessive use of single-use disposables, and to proactively reduce, reuse and recycle. It takes only small lifestyle changes such as bringing your own reusable bag to supermarkets, and carrying a reusable water bottle when you are out and about. No effort is too small. I hope each of you will help us pass on this message. Together, we can bring about a sea wave of change.

13 Thank you.