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Your Excellency Marc Calcoen
Belgium's ambassador to Singapore

Mr Lim Chee Onn
Chairman, Keppel Corporation

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you this morning to witness the ground breaking of the Keppel-Seghers Tuas Waste-to-Energy Plant.

2 Given the scarcity of land in Singapore, waste incineration has been our key strategy towards sustainable waste management. Ever since the opening of Tuas South Incineration Plant in the year 2000, we have ensured that incinerable waste that cannot be recovered or recycled is incinerated, and the residue ash then landfilled at Semakau. Thus only non-incinerable waste is sent directly to Semakau for landfilling.

3 It is in our interest to delay as much as possible the building of new incineration plants which are expensive and take up valuable land space. However, this fifth plant is being built primarily to replace the first incineration plant at Ulu Pandan. When the Ulu Pandan plant is decommissioned in 2009, it would have operated for more than 30 years.

4 This Public-Private-Partnership or PPP-approach is the first for an incineration plant in Singapore. There are significant advantages to using the PPP-approach for such a service like incineration previously provided by the Government. Firstly, it creates new opportunities for the private sector and also allows them to build up their technical and operational expertise. This will in turn improve their credibility when Singapore companies market such services overseas. It is line with my Ministry's aspiration to build capacity in local environmental companies and also help them internationalise. As a Singapore company riding on the good reputation of Singapore's waste management system, Keppel-Seghers has already made considerable headway in the waste management business in several international markets, including the Middle East, China and Europe.

5 Secondly, a PPP-approach can also lead to cost advantages as there is strong incentive for the private sector partner to optimise the operating and maintenance costs of the plant. The private sector can also exercise more flexibility and opportunities for innovation in its operations.

6 I would like to commend MEWR and NEA officials for having successfully tendered out the incineration plant on a PPP basis. I would also like to congratulate Keppel and welcome Keppel as a partner in this important project.

7 Going forward, relying solely on an incineration strategy to manage waste is not sustainable. We have to actively apply our 3Rs or “Reduce, Reuse and Recycle” strategy to minimize waste generation. This is in line with our goal of towards “zero landfill” as spelt out in the Singapore Green Plan 2012.

8 I am therefore pleased to note that the private sector has become more active in implementing and promoting 3R efforts. Altvater, a public waste collector, has been conducting programmes in which residents can exchange recyclables for household items with more than 30 RCs in their collection sector. Just two weeks ago, Tetra Pak launched a programme to collect used beverage cartons from all households covered under the National Recycling Programme. IUT Global, a start-up company, is building a plant to recycle food waste, which is expected to increase Singapore’s food waste recycling rate to 25% from the current 7%. I am encouraged by such constructive action from the private sector in promoting the 3Rs, and I hope to see more industry partners do the same.

Concluding remarks

9 On this note, let me congratulate Keppel Seghers and all parties involved in this project for today’s milestone event. I offer my best wishes for the successful completion of the project in 2009.

10 Thank you.

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