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THE OPENING CEREMONY OF TANGLIN INTERNATIONAL CENTRE  
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Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon.

**Introduction**

1. I am pleased to be here for the launch of the Tanglin International Centre.
2. In 2006, the Singapore Government recognized that a more vibrant international non-profit organisations (NPO) sector in Singapore would be an integral component of Singapore's portfolio as a cosmopolitan city for top talent and new enterprises. The International Organisations Programme Office (IOPO) was set up by the Economic Development Board (EDB) to champion a whole-of-government effort to facilitate the entry of international NPOs who were considering a major expansion of their activities in Asia.

**Growing community of international NPOs in Singapore**

3. Today, I am happy to note that more than 90 international NPOs have chosen to base their regional teams in Singapore. Many have cited our reputation for integrity and reliability, strategic geographical location, seamless connectivity,

a strong community of businesses and non-profit organisations, as well as a strong pool of talent as key reasons for establishing themselves here. I am also happy to note the synergies that are taking place as a result of partnerships being forged between international and local players in the non-profit sector. Cross-sector partnerships magnify the impact of social change and contribute to the development of our non-profit sector.

4. For instance, Operation Smile opened its Asian Resource Chapter Operation Smile Singapore in 2008 to support its medical missions in Asia. Operational Smile performs free surgery for children with facial deformities. It has tied up with Singapore's KK Women's and Children's Hospital to tap on the hospital's technical expertise to develop training and treatment programmes for Operation Smile's cleft palate surgeries. This partnership has resulted in Operation Smile Singapore and its team of volunteers contributing to 17 missions that performed over 2,000 surgeries across Asia.<sup>1</sup>

5. The Special Olympics set up its Asia Pacific Regional Headquarters in Singapore last year. It has worked with Metta Welfare Association and Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS), contributing to the development of local NPOs that cater to the intellectually disabled. I look forward to hearing from the next speaker, Mr David Rutherford from Special Olympics Asia Pacific.

### **Singapore as a node and partner to co-create solutions for Asia**

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<sup>1</sup> This is as at year 2010. The team of volunteers also include Singaporean medical professionals.

6. Many critical issues such as sustainable development, environment conservation, public health, peace and security, confront us today; and they demand increasingly sophisticated strategies and interventions. There is thus a need to enrich our body of knowledge and develop a deeper understanding in order for non-profit practitioners to be effective in tackling the global issues of today. This can be achieved through cross-sector research collaborations. For instance, GK Hope Initiative (GK Hi), a Philippines-based international NPO that has set up office in Singapore, has partnered Singapore's National University and Ngee Ann Polytechnic to conduct research on programme impact assessments in order to refine, replicate and scale up their development model in other countries in Asia.

7. To address critical social issues, international and local NPOs need to co-create and adapt solutions for the Asian context. We hope to be a base to facilitate cross-sector collaborations to create solutions and tackle the multitude of social challenges in Asia. As the international NPO community grows, we hope that Singapore will continue to be a springboard for non-profits to develop capabilities, manage their regional operations, and deliver their programmes to bring positive social change into Asia.

### **Tanglin International Centre**

8. I would like to congratulate the EDB for developing an enabling environment for the growth of the international non-profit sector in Singapore. More than three years of effort have culminated with the launch of the Tanglin

International Centre. Having a dedicated International Non-Profit Organisations cluster enables NPOs to share expertise, network and explore collaboration opportunities. It underscores our commitment to support the growth of the non-profit community. This building has been refurbished and customised to meet the unique operating needs of international NPOs. The Singapore Land Authority has done a good job of creating shared facilities like meeting areas, conference rooms, outdoor gazebos and gathering spaces.

9. We hope this Centre can be a platform for thought leaders and like-minded organisations to engage with one another, as well as with the community in Singapore to discuss and forge impactful partnerships. Already, international NPOs are partnering with local institutions to promote volunteerism and multiply capabilities. We hope this camaraderie continues to grow.

### **Conclusion**

10. I'd like to end by wishing the international NPO community best endeavours ahead as you tackle challenging social issues facing the world today. I believe that the Tanglin International Centre will be able to provide international NPOs with a compelling base to reach out to the rest of Asia.

11. Thank you and I wish you all an enjoyable afternoon.