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**WELCOME REMARKS BY MR CHOI SHING KWOK**

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**AT ISEAS-SPF WORKSHOP ON AGEING AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN ASIA: CARING FOR THE RAPIDLY GROWING NUMBER OF ELDERS IN OUR SOCIETY**

**26 FEBRUARY 2018**

Dr Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State for Health & Environment,

Mr Shuichi Ohno, President of Sasakawa Peace Foundation,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen.

1. Good morning, and a warm welcome to this workshop on “Ageing and Demographic Change in Asia”. I am particularly pleased that Dr Amy Khor is able to grace today’s opening ceremony as our guest-of-honour and give the keynote address for the workshop. I have known Dr Khor for many years, and she is a passionate champion and supporter of initiatives for older persons. She has also been working tirelessly on the subject of aging for Singapore’s Ministry of Health and has valuable insights that will be of interest to participants.
2. It has become fashionable to say that “Demography is destiny”. If that maxim is true, we in Asia have much to be concerned, or at least a lot to think about. The current and future population profiles of East and South East Asia, and its implications in terms of both challenges and opportunities are the key concerns of this workshop. Four areas will be addressed : Institutional care, community-based care, training for care-givers, and active ageing. We are fortunate to have with us an illustrious group of international and regional experts to share and discuss these topics over the next two days. In addition, we have the participation of government agencies, community organizations, and key stakeholders at this workshop. I want to thank all of you for your participation, especially the foreign guests who have taken the trouble to join us.
3. Apart from Japan, Singapore has one of the most rapidly aging populations in Asia. To prepare for this silver tsunami, it has in recent years sought to create strong social support and community networks for seniors, keep them socially engaged, and build up the country’s healthcare systems and services. In fact, addressing the challenges of ageing was one key priority in the Government’s budget for the 2018 financial year that was announced last week. To encourage more caregiving support within families, an existing housing subsidy scheme called the Proximity Housing Grant (PHG) to encourage young

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families to live with or near parents has been expanded in this year's budget. In the latest change, applicants will be given more options to purchase public housing units on the resale market that allow them to live near their parents. All key services for seniors in Singapore will also be consolidated under one ministry (Dr Khor's ministry) to improve and streamline the delivery of services to them. These measures underscore Singapore's efforts to foster a caring and cohesive society in the face of an ageing population. I shall not say more as our keynote speaker, Dr Amy Khor, is the true expert on the Singapore government's work on the issue.

4. ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute is dedicated to rigorous intellectual study of Southeast Asia and the dissemination of knowledge on this diverse and dynamic region. We continually seek to better understand the realities of various regional issues, of which ageing is one, and investigate how they impact or are affected by emerging social, political and economic trends. We believe that a good understanding of these realities and the processes that give rise to them will facilitate the search for viable solutions to the problems and challenges we face. As an aside, ISEAS is also ageing and we will celebrate our golden jubilee this year. From very modest beginnings, we are fortunate that the institute has grown from strength to strength to reach what we are today. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our stakeholders, including many of you here with us today, for your support of our work at this Institute over the last 50 years.
5. I would also like to thank the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, for co-organising today's event with us. This collaboration coincides with the 45th Anniversary of ASEAN-Japan relations. ASEAN and Japan first established informal dialogue relations in 1973, and this beneficial relationship was formalised in 1977 with the convening of the ASEAN-Japan Forum. Since then, significant progress has been made in the areas of political, economic and socio-cultural cooperation between the two sides. Sasakawa Peace Foundation's work with us is a reflection of the increasingly close ties that Japan shares with ASEAN countries, and its commitment to help address the social-development challenges faced by countries in the region.
6. Before I end, I would also like to express our gratitude to the Tsao Foundation for supporting this workshop with a site visit. Tsao Foundation is active champion and pioneer for aging issues in Singapore, and I am sure the visit will be insightful. Lastly, let me wish everyone, especially our foreign friends, a fruitful time at the workshop. Thank you.