

**SINGAPORE'S SECOND NATIONAL REPORT
TO UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION
(UNCCD)
2002**

INTRODUCTION

Climate variability, coupled with rapid urbanisation and excessive consumption by affluent populations, have exacerbated many of the major global environmental problems confronting the world today. These environmental problems include global warming and climate change, ozone layer depletion, the management of hazardous wastes, deforestation, rising sea-levels, and desertification. The global community, in recognition of the potential adverse ecological and economic ramifications, have sought to collectively address the root causes of these environmental challenges. Many nations have recognised that international cooperation is necessary to achieve an ecologically and economically viable future. In addition, it has become increasingly clear, within the global community, that nothing less than a transformation of our attitudes and behaviours towards the environment will bring about the necessary changes required to ensure the sustainability and survival of the global environment.

2 Singapore subscribes to the principles of sustainable development. Singapore also believes that the support of the international community is necessary to achieve a more sustainable future for the world community. In this regard, we are appreciative of the UN's efforts and active involvement in global environmental concerns. Singapore has participated in many multilateral agreements on environmental issues ranging from protecting the ozone layer to protecting biodiversity and endangered species. We ratified the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in December 1998.

3 In addition, Singapore has also demonstrated its commitment to sustainable development by running an extensive range of programmes to provide technical assistance and environmental technology transfer to other countries. Singapore has hosted several training programmes on urban environmental management and other environment and public health-related programmes through the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP). These were offered either bilaterally through initiatives such as the Small Island Developing States Technical Cooperation (SIDSTEC) Programme

and the Singapore Technical Assistance Programme for Sustainable Development (STAPSD), or in cooperation with more than ten Third Country Training Programme partners such as Australia, Canada, Norway, the Republic of Korea, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. To date, over a thousand participants from nearly eighty developing countries benefited from such training. Besides environmental training, the SCP also provides technical assistance in areas such as finance, English Language, IT, public administration and economic development.

4 In addition to international efforts, each country also has a responsibility to preserve their own environment. Looking at where Singapore is now, after 40 years of industrialization, we believe that we have achieved economic growth without neglecting our environment. We have managed, within our limited resources, to strike a balance between development and the environment. This has been our policy since the 1960s and we will not deviate from it. Desertification is not a problem that directly affects Singapore. However, rapid urbanisation has subjected our fragile natural ecosystems to severe stress. As our population increases, the pressure for more land to accommodate development needs naturally accelerates alongside with the increased demand for an attractive and comfortable living environment.

Making the Environment a Priority

5 The natural areas of Singapore serve multiple functions, including recreation, education, scientific research, and maintenance of essential ecological life-processes. However, given that land is scarce in Singapore, balancing the conservation of our natural heritage with a multitude of other land-uses is a challenging task. Hence, land allocation in the planning process must necessarily adopt a pragmatic approach. As a working principle, Singapore is committed to keep Nature Areas for as long as is practically possible.

6 In 1992, Singapore unveiled the Singapore Green Plan (SGP) at the UN Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Earth or Rio Summit. The SGP charted the strategic directions for Singapore to protect and sustain the environment.

7 In terms of land management, the 1992 SGP called on Singapore to overcome land scarcity by employing innovative ways of maximising land use. One of our strategies was to incorporate as many compatible uses in our green spaces. Parks, for instance, were opened up for other compatible uses from horticulture planting to venues for staging outdoor concerts. Moreover, efforts were also taken to ensure that our parks, gardens, roadside greenery and a network of green links formed an integral part of the greening of Singapore. The Park Connectors Network is a long-term project that aims to link up the major parks in continuity via an integrated series of green connectors, including jogging and bicycle tracks. In certain areas, these park connectors may also function as a green corridor for wildlife. To date, this Park Connectors Network project has made much progress.

8 In addition, Singapore also embarked on well-planned scientific studies to ensure that our biodiversity was properly catalogued and well-managed. The National Parks Board (NParks), as the Scientific Authority on Nature Conservation in Singapore, was tasked to monitor and coordinate measures to maintain the health of the Nature Areas. The floral and faunal survey of the Nature Reserves that spanned from 1991 to 1997 was the first comprehensive long-term biodiversity survey ever carried out in Singapore. The enlightening results were useful; some were even startling. This survey chalked 10 additions to Singapore's checklist of vertebrates, and 13 rediscoveries of species thought to be extinct in Singapore.

Reviewing our Environmental Priorities

9 Efforts are continuously being made in Singapore to ensure that policies stay relevant to changing circumstances. The new challenge Singapore faces today and into the future, is not simply one of maintaining short-term environmental performance, but achieving environmental sustainability. As a small city-state, faced with the challenges of a growing population, increased consumerism, limited natural endowment and rising expectations of the global community, it will not be easy for Singapore to ensure that the right balance is struck between achieving urbanisation and the environment.

10 With this new challenge in mind, a review of the 1992 SGP was initiated in 1999 to update its relevance. Known as the Singapore Green Plan 2012 (SGP 2012), this national report will chart Singapore's approach to environmental sustainability over the next ten years. The SGP 2012 is

currently being prepared based on the collective inputs and feedback from the sectors of the society – the Public, Private and People sectors. Its emphasis is on environmental sustainability, to ensure that Singaporeans will continue to enjoy clean air, water and land for many more years to come. It aims to make Singapore into a thriving world-class city with a quality living environment and an environmentally involved people. To succeed in enhancing our environmental sustainability, we envisage 3 key thrusts in the formulation of our plan for the next 10 years: First, quality living environment through innovative and effective use of technology and efficient use of scarce resources to minimise the impact of human activities on the environment; Second, active participation of all sectors of the population to maintain a quality living environment while pursuing economic prosperity; and Third, doing our part for the global environment because environmental degradation knows no boundary.

11 Singapore's review of the nature conservation in SGP 2012 is guided by two premises: firstly, a pragmatic approach to nature conservation, and secondly, the tenet that land-use should benefit the majority of the population on a long-term basis.

Recent Developments

12 The status of the existing nature areas and proposal for new nature areas were reviewed in the context of other land use needs under Singapore's Concept Plan Review 2001. Singapore has decided that Nature Areas will be kept for as long as possible. Moreover, where possible, some newly identified Nature Areas will be integrated as part of parks. In addition to the Bukit Timah & Central Catchment Areas and the primary forest in the Singapore Botanic Garden, two new areas - Sungei Buloh Nature Park and Labrador Nature Park - have been designated as Nature Reserves this year. These two sites were protected for their mangrove and coastal ecosystems. This marks an important milestone in Singapore history, as it is the first time the government had accorded legal protection to an area for nature conservation since her independence. Lastly, the decision by the Ministry of National Development in early 2002 to defer the reclamation of Chek Jawa, a conglomeration of at least 6 different ecosystems, is also testimony to Singapore's consideration to nature conservation during the land-use planning process when possible.

Conclusion

13 Singapore, though faced with geographical constraints, remains committed to the sustainable development and will continue to do our part for the global environment. We believe that in partnering with relevant stakeholders, bringing different perspectives and resources to existing and emerging environmental problems, we will be able to tailor more effective responses that take into account competing needs of all stakeholders.
