

Press Release and Address by the Singapore delegation



Embargoed until
26 September 2003, 1600 hr

PRESS RELEASE

UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Singapore's Initial Report Presentation to the
UN Committee on the Rights of Children, Geneva, Switzerland

A Singapore delegation led by Mr Chan Soo Sen, Minister of State for Community Development and Sports and Education, is in Geneva, Switzerland to present Singapore's Initial Report on the status of children to the United Nation's Committee on the Rights of Children on 26 September 2003. The delegation left Singapore on 23 September 2003.

2 The delegation comprises representatives from the Ministries of Community Development and Sports, Education, Health and Home Affairs. Representing the voluntary welfare sector is the Executive Director of the Singapore's Children Society. The list of delegates is at **Annex A** (*removed*).

UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

3 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international treaty that recognises the rights of children, defined as persons aged below 18 years. It strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children. Singapore's accession to the Convention is a mark of the nation's commitment in safeguarding and promoting the welfare, interests and development of our children.

4 The Convention was first adopted by United Nations in 1989, after 10 years of consultations and negotiations between government officials, lawyers, healthcare professionals, social workers, educators, children's support groups, non-governmental organisations and religious groups from around the world. A factsheet on the Convention is at **Annex B**.

5 Singapore acceded to the Convention on 2 October 1995. The accession came into effect on 4 November 1995. State Parties to the Convention are obliged to present their Initial Report after accession.

SINGAPORE'S INITIAL REPORT

6 To facilitate its consideration of Singapore's Initial Report on the Convention, the UN Committee on the Rights of Children will meet with Singapore's delegation on 26 September 2003.

7 At the meeting, Singapore will be profiling our achievements in ensuring the well-being of children. Our efforts demonstrate our commitment as a responsible state in the care and protection of children in Singapore. The Singapore delegation will also respond to queries by the UN Committee on our work for and with children. The Initial Report can be found at website: www.mcds.gov.sg. A copy of the address by the Singapore delegation led by MOS Chan is at **Annex C** (*removed*).

STUDY VISITS

8 While in Switzerland, MOS Chan and the delegates will meet with agencies that work with children in Bern. During these meetings, the Singapore delegation will discuss with Swiss officials about their work with disabled children and youths, visit a boarding school for children with learning difficulties and be introduced to the tradition of the Youth Parliament in Switzerland.

The Ministry of Community Development and Sports 26 September 2003

For media enquiries, please contact:

Ms Ho Chee Har
DID: 63548305
FAX: 62588605
Hp: 90903051
Email: ho_chee_har@mcds.gov.sg

FACTSHEET: UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November 1989. It establishes children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children. Singapore acceded to the UN CRC on 2 October 1995. The accession came into force on 4 November 1995.

2 The Convention is governed by 54 articles. It spells out the basic human rights to which children all over the world are entitled: the right to survival; the right to the development of their physical and mental potential; the right to protection from influences that are harmful to their development; and the right to participation in family, cultural and social life. The Convention reaffirms that children need special care and protection. It places emphasis on the primary caring and protective responsibility of the child before and after birth, respect for the cultural values of the child's indigenous origin and community, and the vital role of the international co-operation in securing children's rights.

3 Underpinning the Convention is the premise that the **child's best interests** shall be a primary consideration in all actions and deliberations concerning the child. Therefore, all decisions made by governmental, administrative or judicial authorities, or even families themselves, should adhere this principle.

4 While the Convention affirms that children's rights should be respected, it also explicitly states that children have a responsibility to respect the rights of others, especially those of their parents. The Convention emphasises the need to respect the children's "evolving capacities", but that does not accord children the right to make decisions for themselves at too young an age.

5 For more information on the Convention, please visit: www.unicef.org/crc

Ministry of Community Development and Sports
September 2003

