



Name: *CHEE HEAN TEO*

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Distinguished guests and colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. A very good afternoon. Much has been said about the Olympic Movement and its relevance to the youths today. Last year, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) elected Singapore as the host city of the inaugural Youth Olympic Games (YOG). As the host of the first YOG, Singapore has the privilege of co-constructing the Games with the IOC, particularly in the Culture and Education Program or CEP in short.
2. The YOG which places an equal emphasis on sport, and culture and education, represents a shift in thinking and has presented us with an opportunity to do things differently. With this in mind, Singapore has envisioned a Games that will inspire the youth in the sports program, but even more so in the CEP.
3. I will choose to discuss more on the CEP in this short presentation. The CEP is something untested even by the IOC, quite unlike the Sports Programme which the IOC has experienced from the Summer Olympic Games and has deliberated on the template for the YOG.

The YOG Singapore 2010 Approach

4. The YOG Singapore 2010 Games is about taking bold steps for the youths. Through YOG Singapore 2010, we hope to change the way in which we engage and view the youth.

Instead of telling young people what they can or cannot do, we hope to create an environment where they receive support and are nurtured to realise their potential.

5. Young people today have diverse expectations and interests, as those of you who have teenage children can attest to. Give them too much space, and they'll say that they do not receive enough attention. And yet when we shower them with attention, it is sometimes misinterpreted as being too controlling and restrictive.
6. I believe that young people are like saplings – bursting with energy and passion, but also fragile and tender at the same time. In order to thrive, it is important that they receive just the right amount of sunlight, water and oxygen.
7. It may be difficult, but we need to strike a fine balance between giving our youths sufficient space to explore and make their own mistakes, and providing them with the adequate amount of guidance. With the right balance of support and faith, young people will be encouraged to contribute and develop their ideas, and learn to take responsibility for the decisions (and mistakes) that they make. Over time, our youths will develop the confidence and courage to champion their beliefs and values and make a positive impact in their communities.
8. It is for these reasons that the Singapore Youth Olympic Games Organising Committee (SYOGOC) has designed a holistic and integrated CEP that allows youths to express themselves and take ownership for their initiatives. The CEP is a new feature altogether unlike the Sports Programme which is basically the 26 sports from the Summer Games with some modifications in some events to suit our young athletes.

Involving the Youth

9. Even in the various Pre-YOG Games activities for example, we have engaged and involved youth in the planning and implementation process, as in the case of the Create Action Now! (CAN!) series of themed festivals. CAN! was born when a team of passionate youths came together to organise an event in celebration of the launch of the YOG Singapore 2010 logo in January this year.

10. Through CAN!, youths in Singapore are invited to be active citizens in the community and be a part of the YOG Singapore 2010 spirit, be it as a volunteer, organiser or participant in the many events that celebrate YOG Singapore 2010.
11. The Million Deeds Challenge, or MDC, is another Pre-Games initiative where we took what began as a simple idea by a group of students and transformed it into a call to action for every one to be a part of the Olympic Movement.
12. The MDC invites everyone to make a positive impact on the community by expressing deeds of Excellence, Friendship and Respect in their daily lives. The message here is that no one act is too small, and that by taking the initiative and playing one's part, one can kick-start an entire movement and eventually effect a change in the community.
13. What really struck me though, was the heartfelt thank-you letter that one of the students who was involved in the MDC launch had sent to the Organising Committee after the event. And I quote, "My team and I would love to thank you for your great support. This is the first time that we [have] enjoyed working with adults. You made us feel comfortable working with you guys. . . Our experiences working with adults (teachers) were bad, whatever they said went and they didn't give us a chance to speak. But you guys let us have our say and that made us feel important."
14. It is moments like these that make you fully appreciate the power and significance of what we are trying to accomplish with the YOG Singapore 2010 Games. Indeed, our vision for the Games is an ambitious one, especially given the two-year timeframe that we have. Then again, history has shown that it is with ambition that people achieve great things.

The Asian Youth Games – a Test Event

15. We hosted the inaugural Asian Youth Games (AYG) in Singapore from the 30 June to 7 July this year, and it served as a test Games. We tested not just 7 sports and 5 venues but also the processes, from the NOC teams' arrival, accommodation and feeding, competition, right up to the teams' departure.

16. Even the CEP for the YOG was tested on the athletes in the AYG, and judging from the response we received from the participants we are confident that we are on the right track. The young athletes were each given a passbook and upon completion of each activity they would receive a stamp against the activity in their passbook. Depending on the number of stamps they received the athlete could redeem collectibles. More than half of the athletes at the AYG redeemed collectibles. This is encouraging given that the AYG was a very short games of seven days of competition, and also that this is the first time these athletes have been asked to participate in the CEP.

Conclusion

17. What we are doing here is a tall order. By the time the first YOG wraps up next year, we hope that we would have been successful in inspiring and sowing the seeds of the Olympic values of Excellence Friendship and Respect in the young people of the world through the CEP. Through their participation in the dialogue with Olympians, discovery workshops, community projects, art and culture programmes, island activities, world culture village and learning journeys of the CEP I am confident the YOG will make these athletes better athletes for tomorrow.

18. Singapore NOC is honoured to be a part of this Olympic journey as we embark on the remaining 313 days of preparations before the Games kicks off on 14 August 2010. I urge you to join us in this journey as we spearhead a legacy for future YOGs.

Thank you.

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