



**PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**STATEMENT BY MRS. NATALIE Y. MORRIS-SHARMA,  
COUNSELLOR (LEGAL), PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE TO  
THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 84, ON THE  
RULE OF LAW AT THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS,  
SIXTH COMMITTEE, 5 OCTOBER 2016**

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1. Mr. Chairman, Singapore associates itself with the statement delivered by the Kingdom of Cambodia on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the statement delivered by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). We will now speak to the themes for this year's discussions, and provide our comments on the report of the Secretary-General, in our national capacity.
2. There are two themes for this year's discussion, which seek to focus on the rule of law at the national level.
3. The first theme is "Sharing national practices of States in the implementation of multilateral treaties". My delegation welcomes the opportunity that this subtopic presents, to build on our constructive exchange on multilateral treaties that we had engaged in last year. Earlier this year, together with the Permanent Mission of Romania and in cooperation with the Rule of Law Unit on behalf of the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group, my delegation organised a panel discussion on this subtopic. At that event, we heard how the implementation of multilateral treaties

by States – both individually and collectively – and, in cooperation with international institutions, contribute to an international law based on the rule of law as well as the rule of law at the national level. The event summary has been circulated and is available online for those who may be interested.

4. In Singapore’s own practice in the implementation of multilateral treaties, where possible, we seek to engage actively already at the time of treaty-making, so that the Government can give early consideration to the actions may need to be undertaken domestically, including public consultations. Before Singapore accedes to an international treaty, as a dualist State, legislation needs to be enacted to give effect, domestically, to the rights and obligations in the treaty. We strive to make such processes accessible and transparent, so that the changes in our legislation can be understood. One tool that we use, where appropriate, is explicitly referencing the treaty that is being implemented in the relevant legislation. This enables a better appreciation of the relationship between our domestic laws and our treaty commitments at the international level. Transparency is aided by our legislation being easily available online and without any charges being levied for accessing them.

5. The second theme for this year is “Practical measures to facilitate access to justice for all, including for the poorest and most vulnerable”. My delegation recalls that at the 69<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, in the Sixth Committee, we had shared our national practices in strengthening the rule of law through access to justice. This theme is before us again in the context of the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, including Sustainable Development Goal 16. It is therefore timely for my delegation to recall the three key components of access to justice that have helped to strengthen the rule of law in Singapore, and that my delegation had shared during

the 69<sup>th</sup> session: (a) equal access to the legal system; (b) an incorrupt, competent and efficient judiciary; and (c) fair and predictable laws, enacted by a democratically elected and representative Parliament, that are updated and accessible.

6. To further facilitate access to justice for all, Singapore has buttressed our legal aid services. In a significant shift of policy, our Government has started direct funding of criminal legal aid: in 2015, the Government pledged up to S\$3.5 million a year to help cover costs associated with the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme. Coverage of offences under the scheme was also expanded. These efforts complement the work of Singapore's Legal Aid Bureau, which provides civil legal aid, to ensure that persons of limited means nevertheless have access to justice. Additionally, Singapore has used innovations in alternative dispute resolution to make justice more accessible to the layperson by providing a more timely and cost-effective way to resolve their disputes. For example, in 2015, Singapore implemented the Community Dispute Management Framework, which facilitates recourse for neighbours involved in disputes through informal and formal mediation, and as a last resort, adjudication by the recently established Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals.

7. Before concluding, my delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on this agenda item (A/71/169). The broad range of work that the United Nations is involved in through its entities that are members of the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group deserves our due recognition. One of the aspects of the work of the United Nations concerns giving effect to Article 102 of the United Nations Charter. My delegation recalls that, in our resolution last year, the General Assembly had requested that the Secretary-General conduct a review of the regulations giving effect to Article 102. We understand that paragraph 25 of the

Secretary-General's report constitutes the outcome of that review. In that regard, we note that the Sixth Committee has been invited to consider revising the regulations with a view to achieving a number of objectives. The invitation and elements that we have been invited to revise appear to be sensible and pragmatic. We look forward to exchanging views with other delegations, and to receiving further information on these elements, so that we and other delegations in the Sixth Committee can take a considered decision on the way forward.

8. Mr. Chairman, Singapore is committed to the rule of law as a universal value. We recognise the close interrelationship between the rule of law at the national and international levels. At the same time, the rule of law must also be approached and applied in a way which recognises local actors, contexts and practical realities to achieve good governance and to promote the general welfare of the people. We are therefore pleased to have been able to share our national practices and the practical measures that we have undertaken under the themes for our discussion this year. We hope that the rule of law will continue to be placed squarely on the agenda and work of the United Nations in the years ahead.

9. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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