



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

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**STATEMENT BY MR. LUKE TANG, 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, 4 OCTOBER 2017**

[Please check against delivery]

Mr. Chairman,

1. 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 also thank the Secretary-General for his reports on this agenda item, including on the review of the regulations to give effect to Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman,

2. Singapore has always been a firm believer and supporter of the rule of law at the national and international levels. At the national level, the rule of law ensures that everyone is treated equally under the law, where people trust the courts to hear their cases impartially and render judgments in accordance with the law and the facts. It is one of the fundamental tenets on which our country was founded. At the international level, it is a critical basis for international relations among States, and between States and other international legal entities. This is particularly pertinent for small States such as ours, which depend on a rules-based multilateral system for our survival and success.

3. We will now speak to the subtopic for this year's discussion – "*Ways and means to further disseminate international law to strengthen the rule of law*". First, we wish to acknowledge the important role that the United Nations, through the Office of Legal Affairs, plays in this regard. In particular, the United Nations Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law, provides a key platform by which international law is disseminated. We are happy for the opportunity to participate in this important work as a member of the Advisory Committee on the Programme.

4. Second, we believe that Member States and international organisations can and should contribute by playing our part in building capacity on international law. Since 2006, the Singapore Cooperation Programme (or SCP), which is Singapore's primary platform for delivering technical assistance, has been conducting capacity-building programmes on international law. A dedicated "Law and Judiciary" cluster was also established under the SCP's regular calendar programmes to focus on such issues. As an example, we conducted a course on international dispute resolution in Singapore earlier in June this year. Later on in November, we will be conducting a course on the international law of the sea. Plans are also underway to launch another international law training programme in 2018. Further details of this programme will be announced at a Side Event on Rule of Law, which Singapore will be organising during International Law Week. We recognise the important role that academia and other think tanks play in helping to build capacities and knowledge on international law. Singapore has therefore worked closely with such institutions in running our training programmes, and we wish to recognise, in particular, the Centre for International Law at the National University of Singapore for its contributions to the SCP Programmes and to the promotion of international law in general.

5. Third, we strongly believe that in this digital age, where information can be disseminated around the globe with a click of a button, greater emphasis should be placed on utilising the internet as an swift and cost-effective way to not only disseminate, but to receive information on international law. In this regard, the United Nations Audiovisual

Library of International Law provides an excellent platform for this to be done. International lawyers from Singapore, including our Ambassador-at-Large Professor Tommy Koh, have supported this important project by contributing lectures on a variety of subjects, such as law of the sea, regional organisations and international economic law. Singapore affirms the utility of the Audiovisual Library and we support its continuation and further development.

Mr. Chairman,

6. We turn now to provide our comments on the reports of the Secretary-General. First, regarding the review of the regulations to give effect to Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations, we reaffirm the importance of registration and publication of treaties, and emphasize the obligations of Member States under Article 102. One of the purposes of this obligation is to promote public awareness of international agreements entered into between Members States, thereby supporting the principles of transparency and legal certainty in international law. On 25 September 2017, Singapore and Indonesia, in accordance with Article 102, jointly registered the Treaty between the Republic of Singapore and the Republic of Indonesia Relating to the Delimitation of the Territorial Seas in the Eastern Part of the Strait of Singapore. This significant milestone highlights the important role of international law in resolving complex issues between States in an amicable manner. We wish to express our thanks to the Under-Secretary-General of Legal Affairs for officiating the ceremony.

7. Second, regarding the report on strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities, we support the Secretary-General's efforts to make United Nations rule of law assistance more effective and coherent. As reflected in the Secretary-General's report, important aspects of the rule of law cut across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There is therefore a need to ensure coherence and avoid duplication even as the Organisation strives to do more to support the implementation of the rule of law elements of this universal agenda. 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. In this regard, Singapore welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General and his team to consult widely and we would be happy to support such efforts using platforms such as the Forum of Small States.

8. Third, we agree with the Secretary-General's observation regarding the peaceful settlement of international disputes through adjudication at the international level. In this regard, we are pleased that the Permanent Court of Arbitration will be establishing an office in Singapore to administer PCA hearings held in Singapore and Asia. This new office will allow the PCA and Singapore to better serve the dispute resolution needs of States as well as businesses in Asia and to meet growing demand in coming years.

9. Finally, we agree with the observation in the Secretary-General's report that partnerships can play an important role in advancing cooperation and improving results. Some of the most significant challenges of our time are transnational in nature. Transnational challenges call for transnational solutions. In this regard, we believe that regional organisations provide an excellent platform for international partnership and cooperation. As mentioned by our Minister for Foreign Affairs in his speech during the General Debate, regional organisations are an important part of an effective multilateral rules-based system. They help to reinforce the principles of the UN Charter and underpin international law at the regional level. Equally important, they help to build confidence and encourage habits of cooperation. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (or ASEAN), which celebrated its 50th anniversary this year, is one such regional organisation. Since its inception, ASEAN has continuously strived to build an inclusive, rules-based community governed by the rule of law. We believe that such models of regional cooperation are integral to supporting and strengthening rule of law not just at the regional level, but also at the international level.

Mr. Chairman,

10. We mentioned, at the start of our statement, that small States such as Singapore depend on a rules-based multilateral system for our survival and success. We wish to conclude by noting that in fact, small States make up more than half of the UN Member States. As such, small States can and have made significant contributions to the international community. For instance, we have helped to find solutions on global issues, including climate change. We can play a greater role, provided we continue to work together and stay united in our strong support for the UN and the multilateral rules-based system.

11. I thank you for your attention.

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