

**SPEECH FOR MS EMILY TAN, SINGAPORE RED CROSS COUNCIL MEMBER,
WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY & CHAMPION DONOR RECOGNITION CEREMONY
SINGAPORE SPORTS HUB, 10 JUNE 2017 AT 2.40PM**

Mr Lim Biow Chuan, Member of Parliament for Mountbatten

Dr Ang Ai Leen, Group Director, Blood Services Group, Health Sciences Authority

Distinguished blood donors,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening, and welcome to the 14th World Blood Donor Day and Champion Blood Donor Ceremony. I am humbled to be in the company of so many lifesavers.

On behalf of Singapore Red Cross and our partner-in-service, the Health Sciences Authority, I would like to thank you for attending today's Ceremony. We congratulate all the champion blood donors on achieving your donation milestones. I would also like to thank Mr Lim for gracing this event as our Special Guest.

World Blood Donor Day is commemorated around the world to pay tribute to the millions of unsung heroes who save lives. Not only have you blood donors, given the gift of life to patients who need transfusion, you are also the beacon of hope and strength for their grateful families. Your blood has given life to many, and your blood donation is your legacy.

At this ceremony, we will recognise the contributions of 922 champion blood donors. Family and friends, please join me in giving our blood donors and lifesavers a round of applause.

In the foreseeable future, by 2030, one in four people in Singapore will be aged 65 years old and above. The rapidly ageing population presents two challenges to the National Blood Programme. On one hand, blood needs will increase, as the elderly are more likely to develop age-related medical diseases that require blood transfusions to prevent complications. On the

other hand, we risk a reduction in donor population, as blood donors mature and are more susceptible to health problems.

As the population ages, the demand for blood to support more medical treatments will continue to rise by three to five percent annually. A committed donor pool and a sustainable blood supply is the only way patients like Kymn Yee can have access to safe blood at all times. A robust supply of safe blood underpins a resilient healthcare system.

Today, our youth make up 27 percent of the blood donor pool. Our goal is to increase youth donors to make 35 percent of the donor pool. To achieve this, we are embarking on a number of initiatives to engage the youth. At an institutional level, we are working with the Ministry of Education and MINDEF to impress on our students and service personnel the importance of blood donation through a variety of educational and engagement platforms. I am happy to share that the Red Cross Youth, in conjunction with its 65th Anniversary this year, has pledged to rally 6,500 people to give blood in 2017. It is an excellent example of our nation's youth doing their part to ensure blood supply sustainability. These partnerships and initiatives are key to increasing our pool of youth donors - something we need to urgently do.

Many donors have taken their lifesaving passion a step further. Mr Tea Wee Teck from Aon Singapore for example rallied his colleagues and business contacts from the insurance and reinsurance sectors to give blood at our community blood drives. In addition, he championed the blood cause in his workplace and mobilised his colleagues to support the National Blood Programme through skilled volunteerism. They are now working on a data-analysis project, on a pro-bono basis, with the Singapore Red Cross. Mr Tea follows in the footsteps of many dedicated blood donors who chose to promote blood donation in the communities where they live, work, and socialise.

Building a sustainable supply of safe blood

These community partnerships are part of our ongoing efforts to ensure a safe and sustainable blood supply in Singapore. Having a robust and sustainable blood supply ensures

that we as a nation are well-placed to manage not only day-to-day medical emergencies, but also large-scale civil emergencies and security threats. Besides sustaining the lives of patients with medical conditions daily, blood donation also strengthens the bonds between members of the family and the community.

Blood transcends all races and religions. Hence, the selfless act of blood donation reminds us that we are indeed “one united people”. Such unity will help see us through any challenge ahead. We have also established blood banks in the community with the hope that the people in Singapore will embrace blood banks as community spaces, where people gather to do good, save lives and safeguard current and future generations. In many ways, this is Total Defence in action - securing our future and building community resilience for our people, by our people.

There is still much to do to inculcate in all of us the habit of blood donation and the belief that blood donation should be an integral part of our nation’s psyche and way of life. Our success will depend on whether we can continue to inspire new blood donors to step forward to give blood, and encourage existing donors to continue giving blood regularly.

I urge all of you here today to share your journey and achievements with your family, friends, neighbours, and colleagues. Even as we celebrate your donation milestones today, let us work together to inspire the next generation of champion donors to embark on this fulfilling journey.

Conclusion

Finally, I would like to thank our event partners; Singapore Sports Hub and Hewlett Packard for your tremendous support.

In closing, on behalf of Singapore Red Cross and Health Sciences Authority, I would like to thank you, our champion blood donors and bloodmobile organisers, for your presence here today, and for your enduring effort in supporting the blood programme and helping to build

community resilience. I wish you a meaningful and enjoyable day here at the Sports Hub.

Happy World Blood Donor Day!