

**OPENING REMARKS BY MR TAN KAI HOE, CHAIRMAN, SINGAPORE RED
CROSS AT THE SINGAPORE RED CROSS AWARDS
AT YWCA FORT CANNING ON 3 OCTOBER 2023**

President Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Patron of the Singapore Red Cross

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon to you.

First, it is my pleasure to welcome you to our annual Awards Ceremony. I am especially delighted to welcome our Patron to his first Red Cross event since taking office if I may. On behalf of the Singapore Red Cross, I would like to offer our warmest congratulations on your becoming our nation's ninth President.

Awards & Recognition

Over the last 74 years, the Singapore Red Cross has been delivering its humanitarian services to the most vulnerable in Singapore. The backbone of our services has always been our volunteers, our partners and our donors. Today, we honour more than 110 volunteers, partners, donors and organisations who have made significant contributions towards advancing our humanitarian mission in and beyond Singapore. Your tireless contributions and enduring partnerships have immense social impact - you help improve the scope and the scale of our services, bringing help and support to the disadvantaged and persons with disabilities, and alleviate the hardship and improve the lives of the vulnerable in our midst. On behalf of everyone who counts on the services of the Red Cross, I thank you for your steadfast support. [Applause]

Reinventing Services to Meet Evolving Needs

The Singapore Red Cross has reinvented its services to meet the needs of our society, as well as vulnerable communities outside Singapore. Now looking ahead, we are keenly aware of the very challenging humanitarian landscape facing Singapore, and the world, through which we will need to navigate. Destabilising factors from climate change to infectious diseases, geopolitical tensions to civil and national conflicts, and inflation to collapsed economies, will impact all of us, including affluent societies like Singapore. But in almost all instances, the most vulnerable individuals and communities among us, are disproportionately impacted - affecting their living environments and livelihoods.

In Singapore, we also face some critical social challenges in the coming years, in particular the shrinking family sizes and the fast ageing population. These necessitate a shift in our response, as we pivot our services to fill the emerging social gaps.

In recent years, we have curated our programmes to address these needs. Some of these include:

- Ramping up our eldercare suite of services to include home visits, social outings, and home safety solutions, with 24-hour coverage, for seniors who live alone;
- Augmenting our transport service with medical chaperones to support seniors with their healthcare needs;
- Bolstering our pool of community befrienders who can provide psychosocial support, and at all times, emergency response to save lives;
- Launching the caregivers' skills training and mental health support;
- Empowering lower-income families with their choice of nutritious foods;
- Providing academic support and mentorship to children and youth, with the aim of mitigating intergenerational vulnerability; and
- Promoting community resilience by amplifying our training programmes for first aid and psychological first aid, as well as expanding our first aid responders' footprint in the national parks of Singapore.

In the next two years, responding to the social challenges we face, our priority will be to increase the reach of our humanitarian services in Singapore - progressively scaling up our outreach to

seniors, especially those who live on their own, and at-risk children and youth who live in rental flats, extending our eldercare services, young hearts programme, and first-aid responders to more neighbourhoods and the national parks in Singapore.

Internationally, disaster response and rebuilding will remain key elements of our global engagement. Over and above this reactive response, we will also put effort into building more resilient communities, by growing our programmes for regional capacity building and collaboration for disaster response and pandemic preparedness.

Responder for Resilience

To do all this I have mentioned in a sustainable fashion, we will need more volunteers who are well-trained and ready for humanitarian action. Hence to serve the needs of the vulnerable and to foster a more resilient Singapore, the Singapore Red Cross has launched the Responder for Resilience movement, with the aim of mobilising 1,000 well-trained and response-ready volunteers.

We welcome all residents in Singapore to join us in building better-trained and skilled community volunteers. We will provide training in Standard First Aid and Automated External Defibrillator (AED), Psychological First Aid, and Befriending, as well as, opportunities to be deployed across our range of local community services that will enable you to practise what you were trained for. I am confident the training by the Singapore Red Cross Academy will empower individuals to respond effectively in emergencies, whether at home, at work or in the community, and forge a stronger and more resilient Singapore.

The New LifeSaver Award

Among those who are receiving awards today are two real-life superheroes. Earlier this year, when they were on first aid duty at an event, volunteers Chay Him and Huang Siyu performed lifesaving CPR on a cardiac arrest victim. For their public spiritedness and courage, these community first aiders will receive our inaugural *Lifesaver Award*. Please join me in congratulating them. [Applause]

A Caring Community

Chay Him and Huang Siyu are among our diverse group of volunteers who dedicate their time and energy to stand in solidarity with those who need a helping hand. As I have noted, the Singapore Red Cross relies on volunteers and partners to fulfil our humanitarian mission. Our employees, our partners; our volunteers and our donors are at our core, giving life and energy to all our programmes - dignifying, uplifting and saving lives. Collectively, your time, expertise, talent, and funds bring hope and help to those in need, and go a long way in creating a kind and caring society. Thank you for lending a hand to humanity.

Once again, thank you, Mr President, for gracing us with your presence at the Awards ceremony today, and also for officiating later at the opening of the refurbished Red Cross House ahead of our 75th Anniversary later next year. The Red Cross House was opened in 1961 by Singapore's first President Yusof Ishak, to serve as the Headquarters of the Singapore Red Cross. After serving us faithfully for the past 60-plus years, we have been examining various options to refresh or relocate our HQ in the past few years. In the end, we decided to keep the exterior but give its interior a complete "refresh" to keep pace with our evolving times and also our evolving role of the Red Cross. The renovations are now complete and the Red Cross House is ready to re-open its doors. We welcome all guests to visit our "home" after this ceremony.

Thank you.