Mr Chairman,

1 My delegation wishes to congratulate you on assuming the Chairmanship of the Third Committee of the 68th Session of the General Assembly. We also wish to thank the members of the Bureau for their hard work and leadership.

2 Singapore is fully committed to the effective implementation of the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. As one of the fastest ageing societies in Asia, Singapore is deeply convinced of the value that older persons bring to our society, and the importance of the promotion and protection of their rights.

**Singapore’s Approach Towards Ageing**

Mr Chairman,

3 Singapore will experience an unprecedented demographic shift between now and 2030. Our residents are living longer than before. Our population of seniors above 65 years old is expected to reach one in five residents in 2030, as compared to fewer than one in 10 today. Our total fertility rate has been below the replacement rate for over three decades. Falling birth rates coupled with increasing life expectancies will result in an ageing population and a shrinking workforce.
Our government has put in place numerous policies contributing towards the development of older persons, advancing their health and well-being into old age, and ensuring enabling and supportive environments. We have adopted a whole-of-government approach to supporting an increasing senior population whose needs straddle several sectors. For instance, our Ministerial Committee on Ageing was set up to respond to the issue of ageing and envisions a country where seniors “age-in-place” gracefully and with dignity, and within homes and communities that they are familiar with.

**Active Ageing - Keeping Seniors Healthy and Engaged**

Singapore has implemented several schemes to promote active ageing so that seniors can keep their minds engaged and their bodies healthy in their golden years. This includes encouraging seniors to go for regular health screenings and giving them the opportunity to participate in a variety of interest groups, including line-dancing, karaoke, language classes and even excursions to widen their social circles. Such efforts to promote active ageing and life-long learning provide opportunities to boost the self-confidence and self-esteem of our seniors.

**Keeping Seniors Productive**

Mr Chairman,

The Secretary-General’s report A/68/167 identified access to decent work and employment as being important to the social integration of older persons. Further, there are economic benefits to the society at large when older persons remain in the workforce. The Singapore government shares this view. Adjustments can be made to the working environment to take into account the needs of older persons. Retaining and redesigning their job scopes would also stem the loss of experience from companies. We have worked to correct the misperception that older persons are a burden on society and adopted measures to enhance their economic participation. To enable seniors to work longer, a law was passed in 2012 to require employers to offer re-employment to workers who have reached the retirement age of 62, for another three years until 65.
7 In this context, I would like to highlight an example of a Singapore company, On Cheong Jewellery, which had implemented various initiatives to make their workplace more senior-friendly. More than a quarter of this well-established company’s employees are aged 62 years and above. To help its staff develop an appreciation of the company’s rich history and values, it instituted a practice of assigning its older employees to mentor newer colleagues. In turn, younger, more technologically-savvy staff were paired with senior colleagues to assist them when the company transitioned into an automated sales and accounting system. To enhance their skills, On Cheong’s older employees were given opportunities to attend courses on languages, operations management, service quality and team leadership.

Ensuring Sufficient Provisions for Old Age and Those in Need

Mr Chairman,

8 It is important to ensure that older persons have sufficient provisions for their old age. As governments grapple with rapidly ageing populations, they must make the difficult decision how best to achieve financial sustainability. In Singapore, individuals are primarily responsible for planning and saving for their financial security in old age. Working Singaporeans and their employers are required to make monthly contributions to our national social security savings plan, to prepare for retirement. We also recognise that the family is the first line of care and support. As an example, our policies allow the use of an individual’s national medical savings scheme to pay for the hospitalisation expenses of immediate family members such as aged parents.

9 Nevertheless, it is important for the government to provide additional support for those in need. Thus, our government steps in through means-tested subsidies for acute care as well as the intermediate and long term care sector. In 2012, long term care subsidies were raised to cover up to two-thirds of resident households.

Providing Accessible and Quality Healthcare
10 Lastly, on providing accessible and quality healthcare, Singapore has been building up the capacity of our hospitals and expanding the number of nursing home beds. We are also working to better integrate and coordinate care across health and social settings to ensure seamless care for patients.

**Challenges**

Mr Chairman

11 Despite Singapore’s early head start in managing an ageing population, we are still grappling with many challenges. We face a shortage of caregivers to provide round-the-clock care for our ill and aged. Older workers find it harder to get back into the labour force or to secure a job than their younger counterparts. Many motor insurance companies are unwilling to cover drivers over the age of 65, even though they are legally allowed to be on the roads as long as they pass a medical check-up once every three years. There remains much that we can improve on in addressing the ageing issue.

**Conclusion**

Mr Chairman,

12 To conclude, older persons are equal in dignity and rights to us and should not be discriminated based on their age. Their important contributions to society should be acknowledged and their needs met. Singapore remains firmly committed to improving the lives of older persons in Singapore. Bearing in mind the demographic transitions ahead, we will continue to implement and, where necessary, review our policies to ensure that our older citizens remain healthy, active and happy throughout their longer lives.

13 Thank you.