STATEMENT BY MS SHARON YEO,
DELEGATE TO THE 68TH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ON AGENDA ITEM 23,
ON ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT ISSUES,
SECOND COMMITTEE,
17 OCTOBER 2013

Mr. Chairman,

1  I would like to start by associating my delegation with the statements made by Fiji on behalf of the G77 and China, and by my colleague on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) on this agenda item.

Mr. Chairman,

2  In 2000, our leaders took a pledge to eradicate extreme poverty in the endorsement of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs). Today, however, there are still more than a billion people living in extreme poverty during a period of globalized progress and development. In the words of Franklin Roosevelt: The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide for them who have too little. While there has been some progress in the reduction of poverty, it continues to be uneven, with women and children being the most affected groups. More must be done for our fellow countries in need.

Singapore’s development and the role of the UN

3  Singapore is committed to the efforts of the United Nations in the achievement of the MDGs and stands firmly with the international community in its efforts to eradicate poverty. Forty-eight years ago, when Singapore achieved our independence, we were a nation that was struggling economically, financially and socially. We were poor and plagued with high unemployment, labour unrest, political tension, a growing population, and inadequate provision of housing and education. Singapore sought the cooperation of the UNDP and other UN agencies, and with the expertise provided, worked to build the country into a safe and prosperous one.
Education and training as a key lever to enhance social mobility

Mr. Chairman,

4 As Singapore is a small and open economy with no natural resources, we have to rely on human resource development. Hence, our emphasis is on education. Singapore believes that education is a key lever to eradicate poverty and enhance social mobility. Our education system provides opportunities for all students in their pursuits for knowledge and skills to fulfill their aspirations. Singapore has set aside a significant amount of resources to education, from pre-school to tertiary levels. It also maintains a fraternity of high quality educators. Every child has access to education regardless of their socio-economic status and gender, and the success of this system can be seen in the PISA (The Programme for International Student Assessment) which shows a high proportion of Singaporean students excelling academically even from less-advantaged families.

5 Equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to remain competitive, education also ensures that Singaporeans are employable and can generate a steady stream of income for themselves. Singapore encourages its citizens to continually upgrade their skills and stay gainfully employed, and invests in continuing education and training programmes. This is coupled with social security policies to assist Singaporeans in need, like middle and low income older workers. Schemes like the Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) and the Special Employment Credit (SEC) support Singaporeans while staying aligned with the principle of self-reliance. In the long run, this ensures that Singaporeans have the means to provide for themselves and their families.

Housing and healthcare needs

Mr Chairman,

6 Home ownership and healthcare programmes are also part of Singapore’s development strategies and serve to eradicate poverty in a long-term and sustainable way. In this regard, Singapore strongly encourages home-ownership, where homes are seen as appreciating assets which promote social mobility, financial security and a sense of pride. Subsidies are provided for low-income families and have enabled the majority of Singaporeans to own their homes.

7 Likewise in healthcare, Singapore encourages its citizens to take responsibility for their health through healthy living and to save for medical needs
through the Central Provident Fund and voluntary insurance schemes. To make healthcare affordable, Singaporeans receive subsidies of up to 80% of the total bill in public hospitals, which ensure that healthcare remains accessible to all.

**Partnerships in the regional and international arena**

Mr. Chairman,

8 While poverty eradication may often be an issue of internal factors, the fight against it can be strengthened by assistance from regional and international partners. There are many benefits for cross-regional cooperation and partnerships, which include the exchange of best practices, mobilization of resources and technical expertise, and creation of new economic opportunities. The efforts of ASEAN in this regard have been highlighted in the ASEAN statement.

9 On our part, Singapore re-affirms our commitment to work with our partners to eradicate poverty and realize the MDGs by 2015. We will continue to provide technical assistance to other developing countries through the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP). Established in 1992, the SCP serves as the primary platform through which Singapore shares our experience and expertise, in particular, in the area of human resource development and economic development. To date, the SCP has trained over 80,000 government officials from 170 countries.

10 Thank you.