

OPENING SPEECH BY PROFESSOR TAN CHORH CHUAN
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

GREEN CARNIVAL 2009 - NUS FIGHTS CLIMATE CHANGE: WHAT ABOUT YOU?
CENTRAL FORUM, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE
7 - 8 SEPTEMBER

Dr Amy Khor, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, and Mayor of South West District

Mr Andrew Tan, CEO, National Environment Agency

Distinguished guests,

Colleagues, students,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Introduction

Good morning and thank you for joining us at the opening of NUS' Green Carnival 2009.

I am happy to see so many of you here today. In particular, I wish to thank Dr Amy Khor for gracing this occasion. In Dr Khor, NUS is really fortunate to have a strong and long-term supporter.

On behalf of NUS, I would also like to thank the National Environment Agency (NEA) for the generous support of Green Carnival since 2007, and also for supporting our environmental events in NUS such as the National Sustainability Conference held in February this year, and our NUS Arts Festival in March which was themed Arts and Environment. I hope our partnership with NEA will continue to grow and to extend to the promotion of environmental stewardship and reaching out to communities beyond NUS.

Besides NEA, City Developments Limited (CDL) is also sponsoring Green Carnival for the second year. We appreciate very much CDL's generous support, without which the event would not have been possible.

NUS Green Carnival Since Inception

Since its inception in 2006, the Green Carnival has made substantial progress. Today, Green Carnival is the main environmental outreach event in NUS. More importantly, Green Carnival has become a major catalyst and platform which brings together many dedicated individuals, both staff and students, and many organizations to work together towards environmentally important goals.

In 2007, the theme was 'Energy Conservation'. With the help of the then Campus Sustainability Committee and Office of Estate and Development (OED), we raised air conditioning temperatures in all lecture theatres to 24 degrees. This followed a survey conducted by SAVE which revealed that students felt that lecture theatres were too cold for comfort.

In 2008, SAVE set for themselves a more ambitious objective: raising awareness about climate change. Working together with our Offices of Environmental Sustainability, Estate and Development, as well as the Centre for the Arts, they renewed, launched and implemented several environmental initiatives and events on campus.

Green Carnival 2009 Theme

This year, the theme is again climate change but the focus is on the individual. Besides raising awareness of the urgency of the climate change problem, I am told that the overall aim of this year's campaign is to encourage every member of the NUS community to support and adopt three simple environmental practices. They are:

1. Continued education and implementation of 25 degree air conditioning in lecture theatres
2. Reducing the use of paper including double-side printing for student submissions and NUS official documents whenever appropriate
3. Phasing out free plastic bags on campus

I am pleased to announce that SAVE's recent month-long campaign "NUS Votes for Earth" has met their target of 5,000 votes for each of these initiatives. Of the total number of votes cast by students and staff, a significant majority voted to implement these initiatives. In the case of double-side printing, close to 90% voted for double-sided printing for all NUS documents!

At a personal level, I too am trying to do my part to be an active participant in this drive. For example, since 2007, I have largely stopped using hard copies of meeting papers and minutes, relying instead on my laptop and electronic documents.

In University Hall, we have started phasing out the use of bottled water. If you have a meeting in U Hall, you may notice that we are serving water from jugs instead.

Ardent members of SAVE have also convinced me to join the Meatout Thursday initiative. Wherever feasible, I shall be opting for a more eco-friendly diet on Thursdays. These are simple personal choices that we can make, which if summed over the entire campus, can make a meaningful contribution to environmental sustainability. I would encourage members of the NUS community to consider throwing their personal support behind these choices.

Beyond the active commitment of individuals, NUS must also play an active role as an institution. In the overall scheme of things, our contribution to the overall global effort to mitigate climate change will be very small. Yet, as a responsible member of the global community, NUS has to do its part. Reducing carbon emissions from the university's activities will not be easy. Let me highlight some challenges.

Tackling Climate Change in NUS

NUS is a large and growing university. Our large student enrolment, numerous faculties, schools and research facilities, create a substantial demand for resources, especially in terms of energy usage and campus space. In particular, our research activities are growing very rapidly and coupled with the fact that many of our laboratories will undergo regularization to conform to new safety standards, we will experience a significant

increase in our energy consumption in the next few years. Energy consumption accounts for the main bulk of our GHG emissions

We also generate GHG emissions through the renovation of existing buildings and construction of new ones. Since 2006, we have completed capital projects such as NUS High School, Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, University Hall, MD 2, Temasek Laboratories, and the Shaw Foundation Alumni House, among others.

We are currently constructing the University Town, Mochtar Riady Building, Faculty of Dentistry building, and the Centre for Translational Medicine at MD 6. Upon completion of the University Town in 2015, our gross floor area will increase by an estimated 40 - 50%. With new buildings and facilities, our energy consumption is expected to rise even further.

Against this backdrop, reducing GHG emissions in NUS is indeed a daunting challenge. Nevertheless, we have committed ourselves to reducing 23% of our GHG emissions against a business-as-usual scenario by 2020. This may appear a small step but we would in fact need to stretch ourselves in order to achieve or to exceed this goal.

Last year, we set up the new Office of Environmental Sustainability (OES) to help spearhead initiatives that will enable us to meet this target. Let me cite 2 examples of the work they are engaged with.

OES and OED are working to improve our metering infrastructure on campus. This project systematically evaluates existing metering as well as the installation of new meters in all buildings on campus. This will include the metering of electricity, water and chilled water.

Once completed, building occupants, managers and even students will be able to access online data to monitor their energy consumption. We can also detect unusual trends that could indicate possible problems with the energy systems in our buildings. This will allow us to locate energy consumption 'hot spots' and prioritise energy conservation projects. With the new metering infrastructure, we will then launch the Inter-Faculty energy competition.

OED has also embarked on a systematic assessment of our chiller systems as air-conditioning accounts for a large proportion of our energy consumption. The aim is to develop a plan to upgrade or replace chiller systems and to improve the distribution and usage of chilled water to reduce energy needs.

Conclusion

NUS' journey to tackle climate change and be environmentally sustainable is just beginning. Our vision is to nurture an environmentally conscious and responsible campus community. I believe we can achieve this only if we embrace this effort collectively. Our drive to reduce emissions and tackle sustainability challenges is not

only the work of our offices like OES, OED or student organizations such as SAVE. It must be the combined effort of all staff and students.

As students, you can support the environmental movement, participate in various campus initiatives and influence your peers. As educators, we can teach and inspire generations of youths on environmental issues. As administrators, we can make decisions in our respective offices to incorporate environmental considerations. Together as a community, let us organise a concerted and effective response to address the critical challenges ahead.

I would like to end with Gandhi's famous quote, "Be the change you wish to see in the world".

On this note of optimism, I wish all of you an enjoyable experience at the Green Carnival. Thank you.