

**ADDRESS BY MR BENJAMIN JEYARAJ WILLIAM, SECRETARY
GENERAL, SINGAPORE RED CROSS ON WORLD BLOOD DONOR
DAY 2013, DOWNTOWN EAST, SAT 8 JUNE AT 10AM**

Mr Teo Ser Luck
Minister of State, Ministry of Trade and Industry
Mayor North East District

Assoc Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Health & Ministry of Transport

Mr Nicholas Fang
Mr R Dhinakaran
Nominated Members of Parliament

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning, and welcome to the 10th annual World Blood Donor Day
Champion Blood Donor Recognition Ceremony.

I would like to thank our Guest of Honour and Special Guests for gracing this
very special event, to recognise our champion blood donors and mobile
organisers for their contributions to the National Blood Programme.

I would also like to congratulate all 1,484 Champion blood donors and 32
bloodmobile organisers who have achieved their milestone donations and will
receive their awards today. They deserve a warm round of applause.

I am very happy that the number of awardees has grown steadily over the years.
The first World Blood Donor Day was held in 2004, but it was not until 2009
that we awarded the first Medal for Life to Mr James Law, who was then 62.
This year alone, we have 15 Medal For Life recipients – each having given at
least 200 blood donations, the youngest being just 49! This shows that donors
are starting their blood donation journey younger and giving more regularly.

To give broader recognition for the gift of life that blood donors give to the community, we launched the One Million Salutes campaign in January. This campaign empowers the community to recognise the contribution of blood donors in a fun and interactive way. The response has been overwhelming – in a few short months, we have collected over three million salutes!

Last year, we achieved over 108,000 blood donations, surpassing our target of 107,000. However, as my colleague Assoc Prof John Lim has noted, blood usage continues to increase every year. We expect demand to continue to increase, and an ageing population means we need to constantly supplant our pool of blood donors.

I am very excited with our new campaign to increase the number of blood donors in Singapore. Our existing blood donors are very important for the programme. But we also recognise the importance of encouraging potential donors to take the first crucial step to make blood donation a part of their lives. We are therefore launching a new campaign called “Release the hero within you”. This builds on the global Red Cross theme of “every blood donor is a hero”. It speaks to and reaches out to both existing donors and those considering becoming donors.

Currently, only 1.8% of Singapore’s residential population are regular blood donors. We hope to improve on this number. In particular we want and need to increase our pool of regular youth donors. We want to encourage youths to release the hero within them – donate blood and save lives! In this regard we have launched a microsite called the Red Cross Connection.

The Red Cross Connection will allow us to share quickly the latest critical information on our blood stock requirements, for example the need for specific

blood types. The microsite will also feature blood bank locations closest to the user and a calendar of upcoming blood drives. For first time donors, the microsite will have all the information needed to understand the blood donation process.

Eventually, the aim is for youths to make up 35% of the total donor pool, up from the current 32%. We are confident this year's campaign would help us reach the younger segment in the community and encourage them to start donating blood at a young age.

I urge all of you, already our heroes, to help spread the news. Please log on to connect.redcross.sg and then spread the word to your network of family and friends, and through your social networks. Urge others to join us in this meaningful cause.

In conclusion, allow me to note that much of what we have achieved in the National Blood Programme is due to the strong strategic partnership of the Singapore Red Cross and the Health Sciences Authority. We are now in the 12th year of the partnership – a successful one, with both parties doing what we each do best – HSA focusing on blood safety and donor safety, while the SRC focusing on donor recruitment, retention and education. With the continued support of committed blood donors, volunteers and BMOs, we can and will keep on meeting the nation's transfusion needs. Working together, we can ensure that no one who needs blood will have to go without it.

I wish you, our Champion Blood Donors, your families and all blood donors and supporters a memorable and happy World Blood Donor Day.

Thank you.