PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
60`h SESSION

HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETING

STATEMENT BY

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OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

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THE UNITED NATIONS AT SIXTY:

3 My delegation welcomes the opportunity to share our views on the Outcome Document that is before us. It contains many excellent ideas. But fruitful discussion on this wide-ranging Document needs some organising principle. It is worthwhile reminding ourselves that the key purpose of our gathering this year is to review the progress since the Millennium Summit adopted the Millennium Development Goals five years ago. Improvement in the lives of our peoples is the criterion by which history will judge us. It is from this perspective that I will offer my delegation's comments on three issues contained in the Outcome Document: management, human rights and peacebuilding. We consider them the core enabling issues because they structure the mechanisms through which we will succeed or fail in making the UN a more effective instrument to achieve social and economic development.

Management

4 Management reforms directly confront the interests of members against those of the organisation as a whole. They are difficult. But they cannot be avoided and are vital to restore public confidence and support without which no institution can function effectively. The demands on the UN are ever growing. Resources are finite. More effective use of available resources is therefore imperative if development and other goals are to be achieved. The draft Outcome Document has set out a comprehensive set of proposals. We welcome them as initiating a necessary discussion whose outcome I would not at this stage want to prejudge. I do, however, draw a ttention to the suggestion for an independent oversight advisory committee to assist the General Assembly and for an evaluation of the UN's entire internal control and oversight system as having special urgency under current circumstances.

Human Rights

5 The empowerment of our peoples with economic, social as well as political and civil rights must be both the end and the means of development. My delegation has an open mind on the proposal to transform the Commission on Human Rights into a Human Rights Council. But are the essential problems really only structural? The fact of the matter is that all but a handful of what are asserted to be rights are still essentially contested concepts. Is the basic function of the UN to enforce agreed norms or to expand the consensus on what constitutes agreed norms? The answer of course must be both. But the penchant of some states to present their views as universal norms inevitably provokes resistance, unnecessarily politicises the process and is ultimately unhelpful to the cause of human rights. Unless this deeper issue is squarely addressed, any change will be only superficial.

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Peacebuilding

6 Stability and the ability to govern are fundamental prerequisites for development. Bitter experience has shown that instability in one state can have a powerful contagion effect far beyond its borders, stymying development prospects for many. The manner in which internal developments in one state have wider ramifications is only one illustration of how narrow notions of sovereignty no longer hold. The proposed Peacebuilding Commission is an idea worthy of suppo