

For Immediate Release



Singapore Environment Council Proposes National Green Transport Strategy

SEC Submits 11 key recommendations to the National Climate Change Secretariat for NCCS 2012 Public Consultation Exercise

Singapore, 13 October 2011 – The Singapore Environment Council (SEC) today submitted a list of 11 recommendations on actions that the government can take on climate change, to the National Climate Change Secretariat's (NCCS) Public Consultation on Climate Change.

On the top of the SEC's list of suggestions were the introduction of a holistic National Green Transport Strategy, and a nationwide Green Curriculum programme to be introduced in all schools.

Executive Director of the SEC, Mr Jose Raymond, commended the spirit of the public consultation exercise. He said, "With the urgent need for a unified global effort against climate change, this initiative by the NCCS to take definitive action is timely and relevant. A public consultation is a great idea, as suggestions from an environmentally aware public will reveal areas where action is truly needed, and highlight workable solutions that will be readily accepted."

Added Mr Raymond, "Our recommendations were developed with the objective of addressing the climate change issue from both a top-down and ground-up perspective. Our suggestions on policies would also have knock-on benefits of achieving cost savings, and improving the standard of living for Singaporeans."

Elaborating on the need for a National Green Transport Strategy, Mr Raymond said, "From rising COE prices, to the construction of new roads and viaducts to cater to the ever growing demand for road space, to the recent opening of the full Circle Line, there is a clear consensus that Singapore needs a strategy to balance the needs of a growing population with cost effectiveness and environmental sustainability. This balance cannot be achieved simply by growing public transport infrastructure or by continuing to tax vehicle owners heavily."

The SEC, Mr Raymond said, suggests a holistic approach that combines policy measures, economic incentives and encouraging behavioural change as a longer-term solution. "Our suggestions under the National Green Transport Strategy hope to achieve this," he added.

Other suggestions made by SEC include stepping up efforts at urban gardening to reduce the carbon footprint of our food and enhance national food security, expanding mandatory environmental standards to all consumer products, and implementing resource-rationing exercises more frequently to remind ourselves of the value and scarcity of our resources.

The full, detailed set of SEC's recommendations is attached in the Annex.

****END OF MEDIA RELEASE****

ABOUT THE SINGAPORE ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL

Established in 1995, the Singapore Environment Council (SEC) is an independently managed, non-government organisation that nurtures, facilitates and co-ordinates environmental causes in Singapore. SEC's work is founded on three pillars of action – Firstly, partnership with the people, private and public sectors of Singaporean society, to nurture a culture aligned with sustainable development concepts. Secondly, SEC rewards environmental excellence through awards schemes and product endorsement programmes, such as the Singapore Green Labelling Scheme. Thirdly, the SEC collaborates with partners to develop and implement training and learning programmes to build competencies in environmental sustainability within companies, thus keeping our business leaders ahead of the curve. Visit our website at www.sec.org.sg.

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SEC'S SUGGESTIONS FOR THE NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY 2012

The Singapore Environment Council is an independently managed, non-profit, non-government organisation, and institution of public character that nurtures facilitates and coordinates environmental causes in Singapore. In this submission to the [National Climate Change Strategy 2012 public consultation exercise](#), we advocate for more environmentally friendly solutions to our transport needs, a stronger presence of environmental issues in school curricula, a concerted effort to incorporate renewable energy into our national energy supply, and a greater degree of accountability for our business operations around the world, amongst other recommendations.

In Summary, our recommendations are:

1. Introduce a holistic national green transport strategy
2. Introduce a compulsory green curriculum in schools, at all levels.
3. Implement resource-rationing exercises more frequently
4. Create a national "savings calculator database"
5. Enhance national food security through nationwide urban gardening initiatives:
6. Provide households with clear, accessible information on correct recycling practices
7. Provide small and medium enterprises with incentives and subsidies to be eco-office certified
8. Expand mandatory minimum environmental standards to consumer products
9. Rethink the use of air conditioning in public spaces
10. Make Singapore-registered companies more accountable for their impact on climate change overseas
11. Further exploration of renewable energy options

TRANSPORT

1. INTRODUCE A HOLISTIC NATIONAL GREEN TRANSPORT STRATEGY

- Public transport operators should hasten efforts to improve and expand public transport networks. The recent opening of the full Circle Line is a commendable step in the right direction, and SEC hopes that more such measures will further reduce public reliance on cars.
- Encourage employers to implement more flexible working hours and work-from-home policies, so that employees have the option of avoiding commuting during peak hours, reducing the total distance travelled per employee.

- Schools can also consider increasing bicycle parking areas, so that students living nearby can ride to school rather than relying on their parents to drop them off.
- Upgrade existing public transport infrastructure to ensure a reliable, comfortable commuting experience for the public. This will reduce the push towards private vehicle ownership amongst Singaporeans.
- Introduce more incentives for taking greener modes of transport, such as COE and ERP exemption for owners of hybrid vehicles, or even Road Tax rebates.
- Expand LTA's National Cycling Plan to implement dedicated cycling lanes in more residential areas and the city centre to help allay public fears that cycling in urban areas is dangerous, thereby encouraging the popularity of cycling as a viable commuting option.
- Bicycle theft is a key reason that deters potential cyclists from using their bikes to get around, as opposed to cars. Authorities can introduce measures that guarantee the safety of bicycles parked in public places, such as MRT stations, shopping malls and community centres.
- Install bicycle racks on public buses, so that people who wish to cycle to work, but live too far from their workplace to do so, can split their commute between bicycle and bus routes. Additionally, bike racks would also enable cyclists to hop on buses in the event of sudden downpours. Such measures have been successfully implemented in overseas transit systems, such as the [Greater Richmond Transit system](#) in the USA.
- Introduce island wide bike-sharing schemes such as those in [London](#) and [Dublin](#).
- Introduce a "free public transport" initiative during certain times of the week, such as peak hours on week days, or daylight hours on one weekend a month, to encourage people to take public transport.



Figure 1: Bicycle Sharing Scheme in Dublin, Ireland

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

2. INTRODUCE A COMPULSORY GREEN CURRICULUM IN SCHOOLS, AT ALL LEVELS

- Work through the Ministry of Education to devise creative and feasible ways to incorporate environmental and sustainability education into the curricula of kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, as well as Junior Colleges.

Possible avenues through which this can be done are:

- Including “Environment and Sustainability Issues” in the Enrichment Classes held every term. Students would be required to attend a minimum of 10 sessions of environmental education classes per year. SEC is happy to work with the Ministry and individual schools to devise a 10-week environmental education programme.
- Modifying existing the Social Studies curricula to compulsorily include a week’s session on environmental issues and challenges.
- Stipulating that at least 2 school assembly sessions a semester should focus on environmental issues.
- The National Climate Change Secretariat, or Ministry of Environment and Water Resources can issue a “Letter to young Singaporeans” on important annual environmental milestones such as Earth Day and World Environment Day. These messages can be read out to students at school assemblies every year.

SEC is happy to work with MOE to develop a standard environmental curriculum to be implemented in Singapore schools.

3. IMPLEMENT RESOURCE-RATIONING EXERCISES MORE FREQUENTLY

- Conduct quarterly rationing exercises for food, electricity and water for all Singapore schools, offices and households. The intent of these rationing exercises is to encourage a greater understanding of the energy-intensive and expensive processes that bring food, water and energy to our shores, and the fact that these scarce resources should be not taken for granted.
- In addition to the ‘Civil Defence’ message that is communicated at these exercises, an additional message of the threat that climate change poses to our food, energy and water security, and the urgent need to take action against climate change, should be incorporated as well. This will contribute to greater national resilience and resourcefulness in the face of climate change.

HOUSEHOLDS

4. CREATE A NATIONAL "SAVINGS CALCULATOR DATABASE"

- This database would lists common household appliances and cars by brand and model numbers; they would be able to calculate the savings that can be made by individual measures such as leaving the specific car home for one day a week, turning off the mains to reduce phantom load, or reducing usage of the appliance on a certain number of days a week.
- A member of the public could go to this calculator and input data on the type of usage reduction they are able to commit to, and get reliable information on how much money this will save them.
- As an initial step, the Home Electricity Audit calculator that is available on the [10% Energy Challenge Website](#) can be modified to reflect the suggestions above. The database of appliances listed can gradually be expanded over time.

5. ENHANCE NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY THROUGH NATIONWIDE URBAN GARDENING INITIATIVES:

Singapore's tropical climate is an ideal opportunity to increase efforts to grow tropical fruits, vegetables and spices. While NParks' Community in Bloom programme is an excellent avenue that encourages growing edible plants in community garden, this effort can be ramped up to a national scale initiative to convert vacant urban spaces to community food gardens.

- Encourage residential communities to grow fruit, vegetables and spices in landed properties and community garden spaces.
- Introduce supporting infrastructures such as urban crop-share schemes or neighbourhood farmers' markets. This will ensure the effective distribution of food that is produced in these gardens.
- Install rooftop gardens in public and private housing estates, and provide housing estates with gardening and knowledge resources to cultivate them.
- Encourage town councils and grassroots leaders to organise regular "farmers' market" events in housing estates.
- This would achieve multiple national goals, including reducing our dependence on food imports, reducing the carbon footprint of our national food stock and increasing our long-term food security in the face of rising food prices worldwide.

6. PROVIDE HOUSEHOLDS WITH CLEAR, ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION ON CORRECT RECYCLING PRACTICES

There is need for a proactive education drive to emphasise the importance of good recycling habits to the general public.



- In order to encourage better recycling practices, information on the energy and resource savings achieved by recycling paper, plastic and glass, the consequences of “contaminating” a recycling bin by placing incorrect items into it and the ways in which incineration and landfills put stress on our land resources and generate carbon dioxide emissions should be clearly communicated to the public.
- To go a step further beyond recycling, it is important to encourage the repair and reuse of purchased items, and to encourage the public to reduce their overall consumption of products and technologies with a high environmental cost.

BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES

7. PROVIDE SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES WITH INCENTIVES AND SUBSIDIES TO BE ECO-OFFICE CERTIFIED

- Large MNCs and government offices should be encouraged to report on the environmental performance of their office operations, such as energy efficiency, paper use, indoor air quality, waste generation, and transport habits of employees.
- Small and medium enterprises should be provided with financial support to undergo Eco-Office Certification audits, installing energy-efficient office equipment and expanding recycling services in the office. The Eco-Office certification is administered by the Singapore Environment Council.

8. EXPAND MANDATORY MINIMUM ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS TO CONSUMER PRODUCTS

- Just as the enhanced Building Control Act imposes Environmental Sustainability Regulations for all new buildings, there should be similar regulations for minimum

environmental standards that must be met by all consumer products that are introduced into Singapore markets.

- Examples of consumer products for which mandatory environmental standards should be introduced are: detergents (mandatory use of zero phosphate as of P2O5), cosmetics (aborted of harmful chemicals and animal testing), wooden furniture (sourced from sustainable forest or recycled timber), LED lighting (energy saving).
- Singapore Environment Council administers Singapore Green Labelling Scheme to endorse building and consumer products that have less undesirable effects on our environment. For more information, visit www.greenlabel.sg



9. RETHINK THE USE OF AIR CONDITIONING IN PUBLIC SPACES

- Introducing air conditioning to spaces such as bus interchanges and hawker centres is unnecessary, and contributes to avoidable energy wastage. The government can consider alternative measures to cool down public spaces, instead of the inefficient and wasteful use of air conditioning in some public places.
- Examples include the [Eco-Boulevard](#) concept, an urban installation of trees, which is successful in beautifying and cooling down public spaces in Madrid, Spain.

10. MAKE SINGAPORE-REGISTERED COMPANIES MORE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR IMPACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE OVERSEAS

Singapore's domestic emissions may account for only 0.2% of global carbon dioxide emissions. In addition to our national commitment to reducing carbon dioxide emissions to 16% below business-as-usual levels by 2020 (contingent on a global legally binding agreement), it is also important to ensure that Singapore-listed companies also uphold a high standard of environmental performance in their overseas operations.

- Enforce regulations that require Singapore-listed companies to monitor and report on the environmental impact of their operations in other countries.
- The government should publicly celebrate companies who have displayed a high level of environmental stewardship in their overseas operations.
- Conversely, companies who have failed to display a clear environmental conscience should be publicly criticised and penalised as well.

CLEANTECH OPPORTUNITIES

11. FURTHER EXPLORATIONS OF RENEWABLE ENERGY OPTIONS

- In addition to creating itself to be a Cleantech and carbon services cluster in the region, Singapore should also demonstrate a stronger commitment to renewable and clean energy through domestic actions, such as investing in a greater use of technologies such as solar energy, carbon capture and storage.
- The government should also communicate clear national targets for the adoption of renewable energy, and enforce mandatory energy efficiency standards for ALL industrial and consumer electronics, not just air conditioners, refrigerators and clothes dryers.

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