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**SPEECH BY DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER,
COORDINATING MINISTER FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AND
MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS MR TEO CHEE HEAN,
AT THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY GALA DINNER
OF THE SINGAPORE SHIPPING ASSOCIATION (SSA),
ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2015, FRIDAY, 7.30PM
AT MARINA BAY SANDS GRAND BALLROOM**

Introduction

Mr Esben Poulsson, President of the Singapore Shipping Association (SSA),

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Today, we come together to celebrate SSA's 30th anniversary. We are delighted that SSA is an active champion of Singapore's maritime industry, and works closely with Government to further strengthen the industry's development in Singapore.

Government Committed to Grow Maritime Sector

2. The maritime sector has been, and continues to be, a key engine of growth for Singapore's economy. Over the past 30 years, we have grown Maritime Singapore from a small cluster of companies to a vibrant eco-system comprising some 5,000 companies across the full spectrum of maritime businesses and services. Today, Maritime Singapore accounts for some 7% of our GDP and employs more than 170,000 people.

3. However, we cannot be complacent with what we have done so far. We are rowing upstream, against intense global competition. We have to paddle continuously, and hard, or we will be quickly swept away.

4. We have put in place exciting plans to ensure that Singapore can stay ahead of the competition. For example, we are investing significantly to grow our port capacity ahead of demand, by developing a new mega terminal at Tuas. We are also continually sharpening our maritime policies and schemes to meet the evolving needs of industry.

5. But having good plans is only the start. Our plans need to be well executed and implemented. To succeed, we must continue to work closely with SSA and other industry players to attract and groom good people in the maritime sector, one with a strong and skilled Singaporean core.

Close Partnership Has Served Maritime Singapore Well

6. Indeed, over the past 30 years, SSA has helped develop a dynamic and vibrant maritime community. Representing its members, SSA provides invaluable feedback and partner the Government to formulate plans and solutions for the maritime sector. This strong public-private partnership contributes to Singapore's competitive edge in the maritime sector.

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7. Let me suggest three areas where our government agencies have been and should continue, working closely with SSA.

Maritime Manpower Development

8. The first area is manpower, which I have just briefly touched on. Human capital is a key enabler for the further growth of Maritime Singapore. The Government is investing significantly to attract, develop and grow our maritime manpower pool.

9. As part of SkillsFuture, MPA has formed two tripartite maritime manpower taskforces, comprising members from government agencies, SSA, unions, and higher education institutions. These taskforces seek to make maritime careers more rewarding, and help Singaporeans to deepen their skills to take up the many career opportunities available in the maritime sector.

10. Tonight, I'm pleased to announce several initiatives arising from the taskforces.

11. First, we will launch **Maritime Singapore Connect**, a one-stop career services platform to give Singaporeans easy access to information on maritime careers, education and training.

12. Second, we will implement the **SkillsFuture Earn and Learn Programme** in the maritime sector. The programme features a year-long structured work-study arrangement, leading to industry-recognised certification. Each Singaporean who successfully completes the programme will receive a sign-on incentive of \$5,000. Employers will be eligible for a grant of up to \$15,000 per trainee.

13. Third, to encourage the deepening of specialist skillsets, MPA will be giving out **SkillsFuture Study Awards**. Each recipient will receive \$5,000 to help defray the cost of training.

14. And finally, Singaporeans will be able to use their **SkillsFuture Credit** in 2016 to cover fees for a wide range of maritime-related courses.

15. The taskforces will be introducing additional measures to encourage more Singaporeans to take up seafaring careers. MPA will provide more support to employers to train local cadets pursuing seafaring qualifications.

Use of Technology

16. The second area is in innovation and technology. Our companies need to constantly develop and adopt new innovations in order to sustain Maritime Singapore's resilience and competitiveness in the long run.

17. MPA has been working closely with the industry to promote maritime R&D. More than a decade ago, MPA and A*STAR supported a joint project with NTU to develop simulation capabilities for marine traffic and port operations. Today, that project has spun off into its own company – SimPlus – developing simulation solutions and operations intelligence for different parts of the maritime industry. It has since worked with MPA on anchorage management, with our ports on cargo and terminal planning, and with the Singapore Cruise Centre on passenger terminal operations.

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18. Given the increasing tight labour situation, our industry players will need to see how best to leverage technology to help maritime workers do their work better. We hope that SSA will help instill a progressive mindset among industry players, and catalyse the innovative use of technology in the sector.

Safety and Security

19. The third area is maritime safety and security. Last year, MPA launched the Safety@Sea Singapore Campaign to inculcate a safety-first culture at sea.

20. SSA helped to gather valuable feedback from ship masters, which enabled MPA to identify potential safety hot spots. This led to the implementation of new measures to reduce maritime incidents within our waters. These efforts have paid off. Our maritime safety record is at its best in five years – the number of maritime incidents per vessel movement has decreased by more than 80% between 2010 and the first half of this year.

21. But we can still do better. The National Maritime Safety at Sea Council was launched last month, bringing together representatives from the maritime industry, including several SSA members. The Council will build on ongoing efforts, and promote a strong culture of safety.

22. As international trade is the lifeblood of Singapore's economy, we have a strong interest in ensuring that waterways remain open and secure. Since last year, we have seen a worrying trend of increasing sea robbery incidents in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. Although petty thefts account for the bulk of the increase in incidents, we must pro-actively tackle this issue so that it does not affect industry's confidence of the security in the Straits.

23. I hope SSA will continue to work with MPA and other stakeholders to raise awareness of this situation and the preventive measures ships should take. The annual Nautical Forum co-organised by MPA, SSA and ReCAAP, for example, is a good platform to reach out to the maritime community on the issue. Together, we can make the waters around Singapore more secure for shipping.

Conclusion

24. As we mark the SSA's 30th anniversary, it is fitting that we recognise the invaluable contributions of its past Presidents: the late Mr Lua Cheng Eng, Mr SS Teo, and Mr Patrick Phoon. We look forward to continue working closely with the SSA under the leadership of Mr Esben Poulsson and his Council. Let us build on the foundations laid by our pioneers, and work together to bring about more growth and success for Maritime Singapore for many more years to come. Thank you.