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**KEYNOTE SPEECH BY MR TEO CHEE HEAN,
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, COORDINATING MINISTER FOR
NATIONAL SECURITY & MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS
AT THE HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
10TH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM, 30 JUNE 2011**

Professor Ed Liu, Chairman, HSA

Dr John Lim, CEO, HSA

Distinguished Speakers and Guests

Members of HSA, and the scientific and medical community

Let me begin by congratulating the Health Sciences Authority on the occasion of your tenth anniversary this year.

I am happy to join you at this symposium, and I would like to extend a special welcome to all the overseas speakers who have flown in to be with us today¹.

2 Over the past decade, Singapore has shown strong commitment to scientific research and development, including the biomedical sciences.

Scientific R&D aims to enhance health, safety and quality of life.

¹ **Dr Howard McLeod**, Eshelman School of Pharmacy; **Dr Hans-Georg Eichler**, European Medicines Agency; **Dr James AuBuchon**, Puget Sound Blood Center; **Dr Bruce Budowle**, University of North Texas Health Science Center; & **Dr Tachi Yamada**, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Global Health Program.

It will not only benefit our own population but also has the potential to improve the well-being of the wider international community.

3 In this respect, the theme of today's symposium, "Science Saves Lives", is a fitting one to celebrate HSA's tenth Anniversary.

It highlights the organisation's fundamental public health mission that undergirds its diverse national roles in regulating health products, securing Singapore's blood supply, and providing forensic and analytical science expertise to support the judicial system and Home Team departments.

HSA's First Decade

4 Across its different arms, HSA has accomplished much since it was established in 2001.

5 HSA's **Applied Sciences Group** consolidates Singapore's analytical science and forensic testing capabilities.

It provided forensic expertise during the humanitarian tragedies of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the more recent Christchurch earthquake.

6 Closer to home, the Group works closely with other Government agencies, including the Ministry of Home Affairs, in advancing Singapore's forensic science capacity, especially in DNA testing.

It also supports the Agri-food & Veterinary Authority, for example in testing food products in the aftermath of the recent Japanese tsunami and nuclear crisis.

7 During the 2009 H1N1 pandemic, HSA's **Health Products Regulation Group** ensured that vaccines were available in a timely manner for Singaporeans, and leveraged on the National Immunisation Registry to effectively monitor adverse events in a way that other countries could not.

8 The Group's system of multiple pre-market authorisation routes for evaluating new drug applications has often been cited by WHO and other organisations as an innovative model for expediting regulatory decisions without compromising scientific robustness.

9 The **Blood Services Group** has been active not only in ensuring the adequacy of Singapore's blood supply but also in conducting new therapeutic research in transfusion medicine and cell therapy.

The Group is called on by WHO and other international blood bank networks to share its expertise and assist other countries in setting up or improving their blood banking systems.

10 The MOU arrangement under which the Singapore Red Cross runs national blood donor recruitment activities for HSA is also ten years old this year, and has been studied by other countries' blood services as a collaborative model worth emulating.

11 Since 2001, HSA has also actively engaged in international collaboration to become a key partner with global agencies, as well as regulatory and scientific counterparts overseas.

12 HSA now houses four WHO Collaborating Centres² and one WHO Pre-qualified Quality Control Laboratory.

The Agency has signed Memoranda of Understanding with many of its international counterparts like the US Food & Drug Administration³. It has just signed a Cooperation Agreement with INTERPOL to train overseas law enforcement officers in investigation and testing of counterfeit medicines.

Innovation and Collaboration to Meet Future Challenges

13 As the organisation enters its second decade, the global socio-political and scientific environment in 2011 is vastly more challenging than in 2001 when HSA was set up.

14 Under these circumstances, the ability to innovate and collaborate will help ensure that organizations are adaptable and sustainable.

15 Hence, HSA will need to be innovative while always basing its decisions on sound scientific and regulatory principles.

The agency may have to challenge assumptions and decide what is applicable to address the scientific and regulatory issues we face in our context.

This will help give Singapore a distinctive edge as a biomedical hub and a thought leader in public health policy and practice.

² Transfusion Medicine, Drug Quality Assurance, Food Contamination Monitoring and Tobacco Testing & Research

³ Includes US Food & Drug Administration; China's State FDA; Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration; Health Canada; UK Medicines & Health Products Regulatory Agency; Swissmedic; Japan's Ministry of Health, Labour & Welfare; South Korea's FDA; Germany's Paul-Ehrlich Institute; Irish Medicines Board

16 The recently established HSA Academy can serve as an enabler for growing thought leadership in the agency's unique areas of expertise.

In addition to organising scientific meetings and symposia such as this one, it can help facilitate discussion on cutting edge issues in the forensic and analytical sciences, regulatory science and transfusion medicine.

17 I understand that HSA is already a key partner with the Centre for Biomedical Innovation at MIT studying a new paradigm for drug development.

Over time, this could save lives through faster access or better defining the use of niche drugs for special categories of patients.

18 Local and international collaboration will also help to meet the challenges of a more uncertain future.

19 Public sector agencies can take the lead in exploiting scientific and systemic synergies across the whole of Government, by partnering with relevant organizations at home and also abroad.

This will ensure that a concerted, coordinated approach is adopted.

20 HSA's collaboration with Home Team departments in law enforcement exemplifies this point.

The recent Service Level Agreement⁴ between HSA and the Ministry of Home Affairs expands HSA's forensic testing support for the Home Team departments.

21 With greater complexity of investigations, forensic expertise will continue to be an integral feature of our law enforcement landscape.

HSA will therefore need to always keep ahead of the demand for such services through enhanced environmental scanning and ongoing close collaboration with the Home Team agencies.

22 On the international front, HSA's scientific network, and existing and new collaborations with partner agencies can further enhance the agency's effectiveness and capacity.

23 The cooperation with INTERPOL to provide training in combating counterfeit medicines will complement international law enforcement activities through INTERPOL's global complex in Singapore.

This collaboration will protect more countries from the bane of criminal counterfeit activities.

Conclusion

24 In conclusion, I wish HSA well in your endeavours. Stay true to your core values. Serve the nation in each of your diverse areas of expertise, and inspire trust in your decisions as a regulatory and scientific authority.

⁴ The Service Level Agreement (SLA) was signed on 1 April 2011. The SLA is effective for 3 years from 1 April 2011 until 31 March 2014.

25 Have a fruitful symposium. I hope that fresh conversations inspired by the diverse topics at the symposium will generate new waves of scientific collaboration to save many lives in the years ahead.

26 Thank you.