

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**(Embargo till 7.30 pm 4 Dec 2011)**

### **Singapore launches United Nations International Year of Co-operatives 2012 with focus on character building for the young, and the impact of co-operative social enterprises**

- *Minister for Education, Heng Swee Keat launches Singapore's program for the UN International Year of Co-operatives; hails co-operative values as essential for character building among youths, children and parents*
- *Singapore's International Year of Co-operatives program to impact the young, families and leaders from the co-operative, charity and social enterprise sectors*

**SINGAPORE, 4 Dec 2011** — Minister for Education, Mr Heng Swee Keat, officially launched Singapore's program for the United Nations International Year of Co-operatives (IYC) celebrations today at the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner of the Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF), the apex body of Singapore's co-operatives.

Joining the launch at Resorts World Sentosa, were Minister of State, Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, Mdm Halimah Yacob, Advisor to the IYC National Committee and Member of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) Global Board, Mr Seah Kian Peng, Chairman of the SNCF Executive Council and Singapore's IYC National Committee, Mr Chan Tee Seng, Chairman of the Central Co-operative Fund Committee, Mr Chandra Das and more than 400 members and guests of the Singapore Co-operative Movement.

Led by SNCF, the IYC 2012 is poised to be the most significant milestone for the Singapore Cooperative Movement, as it brings together more than 12,000 members of various co-operatives who will be engaged in a year-long series of activities that will raise awareness and educate the public about the social value and impact of co-operatives. These programs include, 'Coopaliouz', a mass carnival at the Marina Barrage, which among its many goals, aims to set a record for the largest number of co-operators reading to children; and a regional conference for close to 1,000 regional leaders from the co-operative, charity and social enterprise sectors, who will converge in Singapore to discuss merits and social impact of the co-operative model of enterprise.

Dolly Goh, Chief Executive Officer of the Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF) said, 'IYC will be one of the biggest celebrations in recent history of the Singapore Co-operative Movement in terms of scale and number of people involved. It is a golden opportunity to get more people to appreciate the economic and social benefits of co-operatives. SNCF is proud to be leading Singapore co-operatives in these initiatives that aims to inspire more like-minded individuals to come together to embrace the co-operative enterprise model of self and mutual help.'

The launch of Singapore's IYC program signals the commencement of a series of initiatives that promotes co-operative principles such as 'co-operation', 'self and mutual help', and 'caring for the community' – principles which are essential for character building to foster more resilient communities.

Minister Heng said, "Co-ops play a special role in society, combining economic viability and social responsibility." Hailing co-operative values as essential for character building among youths, children and parents, Minister Heng said, "In today's fast-changing world, we need to foster a stronger and more resilient generation to deal with the complex challenges that will come their way. Character development is certainly vital to nurturing a more compassionate and resilient community; and I am glad that SNCF and its affiliates have been actively seeking out opportunities, partners and platforms to build character among our young."

The first of several key initiatives for 2012 that was unveiled at Singapore's IYC launch was a series of Children's Storybooks to encourage character building, promote reading and instil positive values among children.

The series would be launched in 4 parts throughout the IYC year in 2012. Written by award winning writer Emily Lim, and supported by the SEED Institute and the National Library Board (NLB), the stories are based on co-operative values of co-operation, self and mutual help and caring for the community. Its 1<sup>st</sup> of four books, titled 'A Very Big Storm', was launched on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2011, where Minister Heng Swee Keat and Mr Chan Tee Seng, Chairman of the SNCF Executive Council presented its very first issue to Mr Seah Kian Peng, member of the UN IYC Advisory Group and member of the ICA Global Board, symbolizing Singapore's gift of sharing co-operative values to the world community. An electronic version of the book was also launched at the same event, and will be free for download exclusively on 4 and 5 December 2011.

## **Key IYC Initiatives**

### **Children's Storybook series (launched in 4 parts throughout 2012)**

SNCF has launched a Children's Storybook series to encourage character building, promote reading and instill positive values among children. Written by award winning writer Emily Lim, supported by SEED Institute, the stories are based on co-operative values of co-operation, mutual help, self-help and caring for the community.

### **Photography Competition (1 March to 10 May 2012)**

A photography competition will provide a platform for the general public, especially photography enthusiasts to put their shooting skills to good use. Participants will need to interpret cooperative values and represent them through photographs. Award-winning photos will be displayed during Co-opaliciouz on 9 June 2012.

### **Co-opaliciouz (9 June 2012)**

Co-opaliciouz is an event that aims to bring more than 10,000 co-operators and their children together to learn about co-operative values through the mass reading of a storybook in the IYC 2012 Children Storybook series. This activity is the culminating event to the fund-raising for the mobile library minibus. This is where father figures and members of co-operatives who have done well, can help by giving back to the community and shape the hearts and minds of the future generation.

### **Launch of Postage Stamps & First Day Covers (7 July 2012)**

A series of postage stamps and 4,000 First Day Covers will be launched to commemorate Singapore in celebration of IYC. A total of 11,000 commemorative stamps are expected to be exchanged throughout 2012 and the stamps will be put to use in selected celebration activities.

### **IYC Regional conference (3 October 2012)**

The IYC Regional conference will bring close to 1,000 co-operative leaders from the region as well as representatives from global co-operatives like Rabobank and Fonterra to Singapore. Themed "How Social Capital drives Growth and Sustainability", the conference provides a platform to discuss the value and future direction of co-operatives. Author Rosabeth Kanter who wrote the acclaimed book 'SuperCorp' will be the keynote speaker. The attendees will include 350 leaders from the VWO and NPO sectors in Singapore. To mark the end of the conference, 100 co-operators from Singapore and region will go on a round-trip car rally to Malaysia.

### **IYC Closing & Honour Awards Dinner (January 2013)**

A closing dinner will be hosted for 500 leaders and members of Singapore co-operatives. An awards presentation will also take place to honour those who have contributed to growing the co-operative movement in Singapore.

## **About Singapore National Co-operative Federation**

The Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF) is the apex body of Singapore's Cooperative Movement, and secretariat of the Central Co-operative Fund (CCF). Formed in 1980 with the aim of championing Singapore's co-operative movement, the apex body represents 99% of co-operative members in Singapore through its 70 affiliated co-operatives. Today, the Movement boasts a base of more than 1 million members.

SNCF aims to promote and develop co-operatives as sustainable enterprises that address social and economic needs through the co-operative principle of self and mutual help, so as to foster a more resilient society. SNCF is an affiliate of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) and the World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU). It enjoys co-operative relationship with the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and other international and regional bodies.

For more information on SNCF and the Singapore Co-op movement, visit [www.sncf.org.sg](http://www.sncf.org.sg)

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