

**Speech by Mr Ling Khoon Chow, Director, Red Cross Youth,
at the Red Cross Youth 60th Anniversary Dinner
on Friday, 25 January 2013**

Ms Sim Ann

Senior Parliamentary Secretary

Ministry of Communications and Information & Ministry of Education

Mr Tee Tua Ba

Chairman, Singapore Red Cross

Fellow Volunteers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening, and welcome to the Singapore Red Cross Youth's 60th Anniversary Dinner. On behalf of the Red Cross, I would like to thank Ms Sim Ann for joining us in commemorating our Diamond Anniversary. I would also like to specially welcome our senior volunteers and alumni who are with us this evening.

The very first Red Cross Youth unit – or the Junior Red Cross, as it was then called – was set up in 1952, when we were still a British colony. Many things have changed in 60 years, but the one thing that has remained constant through all this time is that we are still serving humanity.

In the 1960s, Red Cross Youth cadets volunteered as nursing auxiliaries as part of the Red Cross Hospital Nursing Service. They would visit the sick in hospitals, sponge them, take their temperature, and offer support to the nurses. Our Youths in the 80s would volunteer regularly in the Free Clinic run by the Red Cross, packing

medicine into sachets and helping to dispense them to patients. Such services were discontinued as the health service in Singapore became more professional. However, we are still directly involved in critical programmes such as blood donation advocacy, first aid coverage and International Humanitarian Law, all of which are unique to the Red Cross Movement.

These programmes allow our youth to appreciate the importance of stepping forward to aid the community through actions and not just classroom exercises. First aid and blood donor recruitment are life-saving skills which enable our youth to create a positive ripple effect of community bonding.

The Red Cross Youth today has a membership of about 4,000 students. We are keenly aware that it is a challenge to stay relevant and continue to attract young members in order to maintain the strength and attractiveness of a uniformed group in the schools. This is why we have embarked on a more consultative and engaging approach in reviewing and evolving our curriculum, focusing more on character and leadership development, and management skills. These soft skills will stand our youths in good stead when they venture out into the working world.

Today young people are exposed to many different influences; some good, some bad. It is important to inculcate the right values in the young, to ensure that they mature to become men and women of integrity. In a multi-racial, multi-religious society like Singapore, it is important that we evolve a society that is not only tolerant, but also community-minded, with each person willing to go the extra mile for the

good of society. We believe that experiential learning will allow our youth to constantly have the value of community volunteering in mind till adulthood.

We also help our cadets fulfil the Red Cross mission of serving the most vulnerable in our community by regularly participating in fundraising activities for local and overseas aid as well as in meaningful community service projects, both in Singapore and abroad. Our cadets also have the opportunity to represent Singapore in regional and international youth workshops organised by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. These platforms give our youth invaluable experiences and expose them to the work of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement.

We achieved a significant milestone in 2012 as we integrated the former Red Cross Humanitarian Network, comprising Red Cross volunteers in post-secondary institutions, with the Red Cross Youth Uniformed arm. This brings even more students together under the umbrella of the Red Cross Youth, allowing us to better serve humanity through synergy of resources, and exemplifies the Red Cross Movement's principle of Universality. We envisage a seamless transition in the volunteering experience of our youth volunteers as they progress from Primary to Secondary and Post-Secondary education, and indeed, to adulthood.

As we celebrate our 60th anniversary, I am reminded that we could not have come this far without the support of all our stakeholders, especially our volunteer officers and instructors in schools, who are the pillars of support for the Red Cross Youth. We have made it this far because we have a network of committed and passionate volunteers who believe in what we do and see the importance of

developing the next generation of humanitarian leaders. Together, they nurture our youths in leadership and character development.

The Red Cross Youth continues to be an important part of the Singapore Red Cross and we will continue to support Singapore Red Cross as it focuses more attention on responding to the needs of the most vulnerable in our local community.

In closing, I would like to thank the Council Members of the Singapore Red Cross, MOE uniformed group section, Principals, Heads of Departments, youth officers, and of course the volunteers of the Red Cross Youth. Without you, the past 60 years would not have been possible. We look forward to your continued support and contributions to provide the best for our members and develop them to become responsible and resilient global citizens who are leaders in the field of humanitarian work. A special thank you to the organising committee led by our senior volunteer, Mrs Tan Sin Yen.

To our senior and veteran volunteers who have joined us today, I would like to make a call for you to once again reconnect with the Red Cross Family. Thank you for attending tonight's dinner and I hope everyone will have an enjoyable time.