

**Welcome Remarks by Mr Tan Kai Hoe, Singapore Red Cross Chairman
World Blood Donor Day 2024 Champion Recognition Ceremony
Marina Bay Sands Expo & Convention, 29 June 2024**

Ms Rahayu Mahzam, Minister of State, Ministry of Communications and Information & Ministry of Health

Professor Benjamin Ong, Chairman, Health Sciences Authority

Doctor Mimi Choong, Chief Executive Officer, Health Sciences Authority

Mr Benjamin William, Secretary General/CEO, Singapore Red Cross

Champion Blood Donors

Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good morning to all of you. On behalf of the National Blood Programme, I am pleased to welcome you to World Blood Donor Day 2024. This year we are holding the celebrations after the June school holidays, and I am glad that many more of you have been able to join us today. I am also pleased to hear that 230 donors have registered to give blood today at our blood drive.

To the Champion Blood Donors among us today, we salute you. Despite your hectic school, work, and personal commitments, you have prioritised blood donations - making time to incorporate this life-saving act as part of your regular lifestyle. Later today, we will hear from Ms Charmaine Seah-Ong, whose elder daughter Charlie received blood to boost her platelet count when she was battling acute leukaemia. Champion donors, you have made a tremendous impact on many lives. Someone's loved one is alive today because of your precious blood donation. On behalf of blood recipients in Singapore, thank you very much.

Blood is needed not only in emergencies and for surgeries, but is often required to support ongoing treatment through regular transfusions to treat patients with certain life-threatening conditions, like thalassemia or leukaemia. Allow me to introduce Mr Zakir bin Isahak. Every month, he looks forward to visiting the Bloodbank to make regular donations to save the lives of these patients. He enjoys his experience at the Bloodbank, and the employees there make him feel welcome, and comfortable, and they take good care of him. He has made 200 donations and today he will receive the most prestigious *Medal for Life award*, together with 33 others here. Let's give him, as well as the other Medal for Life award recipients, a round of applause.

Annually blood donors make up about 1.8 percent of Singapore's residential population - about 77,000 donors shoulder the country's blood transfusion needs. To ensure the sustainability of the National Blood Programme, the Singapore Red Cross and the Health Sciences Authority will continue to drive initiatives to increase the donor pool. We will do so through several strategies and approaches.

One is Forging Community Partnerships

The Singapore Red Cross relies on our partners and civic-minded organisations to advocate blood donation and organise group donations and blood drives in the community. These efforts entail meticulous planning and enthusiastic mobilisation by community groups. I wish to acknowledge the support of Blood Champions as well, such as the Combat Service Support Command or CSSCOM, the Neo Group, the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu-Chi Foundation, and the Community Clubs and Community Emergency Engagement Committees of the People's Association. Working closely with the Singapore Red Cross, they have organised mobile blood drives, advocated for blood donations at roadshows, and provided intrepid and steadfast support for the National Blood Programme over all these years, actively enhancing community resilience.

Going forward, the Singapore Red Cross will continue to strengthen such existing partnerships and develop new ones to further diversify our blood donor recruitment, and amplify community outreach, and enhance the visibility of its campaigns. These collective efforts will lay the groundwork to inspire more individuals to donate blood and embrace regular blood donations.

We are Also Engaging Youth Donors

With a rapidly ageing population, recruiting and retaining more youth donors is essential to ensure the sustainability of our National Blood Programme. The Singapore Red Cross will continue to engage school children, including those who are not old enough perhaps to donate yet, through activities like learning journeys to the bloodbanks and other educational and advocacy activities in schools and institutes of higher learning. The Red Cross Youth uniformed group, through the Youth Blood Donor Programme, nurtures blood donation advocates in primary and secondary schools. We also work closely with tertiary institutions to organise outreach activities and blood drives on campuses. We have also introduced the importance of blood donation to our Red Cross Juniors in the kindergartens!

Ms Chua Jo Er gave blood for the first time because she saw the positive impact of blood donations on the recipients. Today, at the age of 25, she has already made 20 blood donations. Along with 36 others, Ms Chua will receive the newly inspired YOUTHphoria award. We hope that initiatives such as these will foster a culture of blood donation, and pave the way for youth to commit to making regular blood donations.

Now, this year's World Blood Donor Day theme celebrates all of you as 'Champions in the Community'. With your help, we hope to grow this community of champions, by galvanising more conversations on blood donation and inspiring more people to embrace this habit of regular blood donation. Thank you for being here today, and for making blood donation a part of your everyday lives.

Happy World Blood Donor Day! Thank you.