

10 March 2015

Response by Deputy Prime Minister & Coordinating Minister for National Security & Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Teo Chee Hean, to Non-Constituency Member of Parliament, Mrs Lina Chiam, on Overseas Voting during the Committee of Supply Debate 2015

Madam Speaker, the issue on improving access to overseas voting has been raised before at previous parliamentary sessions.

2 The selection of overseas polling station takes into account several factors. First, there should be a significant number of Singaporeans living in that city and country. Second, the city must have Singapore Government managed facilities which enable the officials to exercise control to ensure that the voting process is carried out in a proper and orderly manner and the integrity of the process is safeguarded. Third, in order to ensure that we are able to optimise our limited resources, the city or country should not be so nearby that Singaporeans can travel back to Singapore to vote on polling day with relative ease.

3 Based on these considerations, the cities where we can site overseas polling stations are those where we have consulates or missions with sufficient mission staff to manage the overseas polls. At the last general and presidential elections in 2011, we had nine overseas polling stations where overseas Singaporeans could vote.

4 The list of overseas polling stations is reviewed regularly, and the Elections Department has recently announced a new overseas polling station in Dubai to serve overseas Singaporeans in the Middle East region. Eligible overseas Singaporeans can register as an overseas elector or change their assigned overseas polling station online via the Elections Department website with SingPass authentication.

5 We need a balance here. We extend overseas voting by this system to many Singaporeans who are overseas and who want to vote. But we also need Singaporeans themselves to take a step forward to exercise their right to vote by coming to the polling stations either in Singapore if they are close by or to the ones which are closest to them, and we have made registration for them much easier.