

Addendum to the President's Address in Parliament on 18 May 2009

Supplementary information on the Ministry of Law's Addendum

A vibrant legal services sector

To create a vibrant legal services sector, the Government awarded six Qualifying Foreign Law Practice (QFLP) licences to top international law firms in December 2008. Four of the QFLPs – Clifford Chance, White & Case, Herbert Smith and Norton Rose – commenced operations in May this year. The other two – Allen & Overy and Latham & Watkins – are expected to start by June.

2 In spite of the global downturn, the QFLPs remain positive about economic growth in Asia and the potential of Singapore as a legal services hub for the region. While global law firms around the world are downsizing in response to the global downturn, some QFLPs and foreign law firms in Singapore continue to employ more lawyers, some of whom are senior partners.

Growing Singapore as an arbitration hub

3 We continue to build upon our positioning as an international arbitration venue of choice. Leveraging heritage and technology, Maxwell Chambers is the world's first integrated dispute resolution complex, housing both best-of-class hearing facilities as well as leading international arbitral institutions and practitioners. Open for reservation from late July / early August 2009, Maxwell Chambers will have 14 fully equipped hearing rooms, 12 preparation rooms and a full suite of supporting services, such as recording, transcription, catering, concierge and secretarial. The facilities can also be used for meetings, seminars and conferences.

4 Apart from excellent facilities, Maxwell Chambers will also house renowned arbitral institutes such as:

- International Court of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce
- International Centre for Dispute Resolution Singapore (ICDRS)
- Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)
- Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC)
- Singapore Institute of Arbitrators
- Singapore Chamber of Maritime Arbitration

5 Maxwell Chambers will host the inaugural Singapore International Arbitration Forum (SIAF) 2010 from 21 to 22 January 2010 in Singapore. The event is co-organised by SIAC and supported by the International Chamber of Commerce, ICDRS, PCA and the Singapore Institute of Arbitrators. The SIAF 2010 will bring together some

of the world's most respected and influential figures in international arbitration for an open dialogue and exchange of information, best practices, views and insights on critical issues facing the industry around the central theme, "The Future for International Arbitration".

Developing a national spatial data infrastructure

6 The Ministry of Law and Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts are jointly leading whole-of-government efforts to develop a national spatial data infrastructure called the Singapore Geospatial Collaborative Environment (SG-SPACE). Under a three-year masterplan, SG-SPACE will facilitate greater sharing and use of geospatial information for both government agencies and the private sector through investments to create a geospatial information exchange system to foster a thriving geospatial information industry. This will reduce duplication of efforts in geospatial information collection in the public sector and offer potential for new business opportunities.

7 When fully implemented, SG-SPACE will bring about many benefits to the public service and private enterprise. Better access to geospatial information will help in areas such as security and emergency planning and operations, communicable disease control and management, public healthcare planning, environmental and climate change monitoring. The private sector will be able to leverage richer geospatial information to offer a more diverse range of location-based business services, for example, in analysing and planning for business location and market catchment, managing and tracking logistics and goods movement, as well as location-based products and services promotion. Similarly, individuals and communities will benefit from the use of geospatial information for social networking and active participation in community issues.

Singapore as a regional IP education and training hub

8 We continue to review and strengthen our Intellectual Property (IP) legislation and regime, and develop Singapore into a regional IP education and training hub. The World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Singapore Office was set up in 2005 for WIPO to establish a stronger presence in Singapore from which to reach out to the region. The WIPO-Singapore Office is arguably WIPO's key external office today, representing WIPO in the Asia-Pacific region by coordinating technical assistance programmes. Given WIPO's focus on training and capacity-building activities, it has also lent credence to Singapore's goal of becoming a regional IP education and training hub.

9 In March 2009, WIPO made a decision to upgrade the office, increase the number of professionals and expand the nature and scope of functions of the WIPO-Singapore Office. It is envisaged that the expanded outfit will strengthen its cooperation with Singapore, facilitate the provision of more focused assistance to meet the needs of countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and also serve as a regional service centre for a

range of IP international services (such as multi-jurisdictional IP registrations and IP alternate dispute resolution, as well as patent information services) currently provided by the WIPO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

MINISTRY OF LAW
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