

**Commonwealth 3<sup>rd</sup> Country Training Programme in Singapore**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> International Disaster Management Programme**

Honourable representatives from

the **Singapore Civil Defense Force** *Col Anwah and Lt Col Lin Han Chee,*

the **Commonwealth Secretariat** *Mr Julius Kaberere,*

and the **Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs** *Ms Denise Cheng and Ms Annie Ang*

I have the honour of thanking you, on behalf of my colleagues, at this morning's closing ceremony.

I have travelled further than most, flying over 20 hours from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (in the Caribbean) two weeks ago, to attend the International Disaster Management Programme here in Singapore. The week before my departure, I thought about the three long connecting flights that I would have to take, and the 12-hour time difference to which I would have to adjust when I got here, and I began to wonder if it would be worth it.

I am happy to say today that it definitely was, and my colleagues agree. Your hospitality was excellent. On arrival, friendly representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs met us at the airport and the hotel. Every day coming into the Civil Defense Academy, my colleagues and I were greeted by warm, welcoming staff who treated us with utmost respect and care, always asking if there was anything that they could do to improve our experience.

During the course, a wide range of senior and knowledgeable personnel from the Academy, and other government and public agencies, graciously took time out of their schedules to share with us the details about the structure and operation of disaster management in Singapore. It was clear that a lot of time and effort went into preparing each and every lecture, and putting together a 2-week course that covered almost every key area in disaster preparedness and response. The tours of the SCDF Academy, operations center and fire stations were wonderful additions. We are truly impressed

that you have put this programme together for us, your fellow Commonwealth countries, in the spirit of sharing and helping each other to learn and grow. Thank you.

Outside of class, the twenty-four of us, all coming to Singapore for the first time (I believe), took the opportunity to explore your country. Singapore is an amazing place, much bigger than its small size of 707 square kilometers. It is full of friendly people, rich culture, stunning buildings, luscious vegetation, and thriving industry. It was wonderful to learn about your home over the past 2 weeks – visiting Sentosa Island, Jurong Island, Orchard Road, Clark Quay , Bugis Street, Chinatown, Little India and of course the professor's favourite place, Mustafa's.

Today, on the last day of two weeks of sharing and learning in your country, we prepare to return to our homes. We are excited to return to our families and loved ones, but we are also excited to return to our various offices, departments, ministries and agencies. We leave here with increased knowledge and awareness, and a renewed desire to protect the communities in our own countries from the negative impacts of disaster. We are eager to discuss with others in our organizations how some of your approaches might be integrated into our disaster management systems, making them stronger and better. Thank you, all of you, for providing the opportunity and the environment that have created this vision in us.

To my fellow classmates, thank you for sharing your time and thoughts both in and out of class. I think we became a group that was fun and vibrant, and accommodating to the differences between us. I wish you all safe trips back home, and I am sure that many of us will be keeping in touch in the future. For now, good bye and good luck.

Thank you.