

**SPEECH BY MR SEAH KIAN PENG
SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT OF SINGAPORE
AT THE 11TH G20 PARLIAMENTARY SPEAKERS' SUMMIT
(P20) IN KLEINMOND, SOUTH AFRICA,
FROM 1 TO 3 OCTOBER 2025**

**SINGAPORE'S INTERVENTION AT THE FIRST WORKING
SESSION ON "STRENGTHENING DISASTER RESILIENCE
AND RESPONSES"**

Introduction

Excellencies, Honourable ladies and gentlemen,

Sanibonani [*SAH-NI-BOH-NAH-NI*]¹

Molweni [*MOL-WEH-NI*]²

Good afternoon,

2 I extend my heartfelt appreciation to Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of South Africa, The Honourable Angela Thokozile Didiza [*TOH-KOH-ZEE-LEH DI-DEE-ZAH*], and Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces, The Honourable Refilwe Mtsweni-Tsipane [*REH-FEEL-WEH MIRT-SWEH-NEE SEE-PAH-NEH*], as well as to the Parliament of South Africa, for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements for this Summit.

Singapore's Whole-of-Government Approach

3 Singapore's journey towards disaster resilience has been shaped by our unique geography. We are a small island nation of 5.9 million people living on just 730 square kilometres, which is approximately three times smaller than Cape Town or less than half the land surface

¹ Greeting (plural form) in the Zulu language, which is the mother tongue of both National Assembly Speaker Thoko Didiza, and National Council of Provinces Chairperson Refilwe Mtsweni-Tsipane, the co-hosts of P20 in 2025. It means "I see you" in English.

² Greeting (plural form) in the Xhosa language, which is a major African language spoken in the Hermanus area.

area of Overstrand Municipality, where Hermanus is located. We have no hinterland to retreat to, no natural resources to fall back upon, and extremely limited space.

4 Hence, every square metre matters, every system must work, and every citizen must be prepared for disasters. This reality has forged our comprehensive and adaptive approach to disaster resilience.

5 Our strategy rests on three fundamental pillars: prevention, preparedness, and response and recovery. To implement these, we have established a whole-of-government framework that cuts across ministries.

6 Parliament plays an important role in this ecosystem. Legislation such as the Civil Defence Act and the Public Utilities Act provides the foundation for emergency powers and resource mobilisation. Parliamentary committees scrutinise preparedness measures, ensuring that resilience remains a national priority across political cycles.

Harnessing Technology and Science

7 Technology has been a key enabler. Under our Smart Nation initiative, artificial intelligence guides flood management and digital platforms enable crisis communication. During the global COVID-19 pandemic, our digital contact tracing system and online parliamentary proceedings demonstrated how technology can sustain essential functions amid disruption.

Building Community Resilience

8 However, technology alone cannot build resilience—people must be at the heart of our efforts. Singapore adopts a people-centric approach equipping and mobilising the community as first responders. Last year, more than 4300 Community First Responders stepped in to render assistance to emergencies which took place near their vicinity.

Regional and International Cooperation

9 Singapore also actively participates in ASEAN disaster management mechanisms and contributes to regional humanitarian assistance efforts. Singapore is the co-chair of the Working Groups on Preparedness Response and Recovery, and Global Leadership of the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management

10 As Co-Chair of two out of three Working Groups, Singapore plays its part to capacity building and thought leadership at the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management in areas where we have the relevant expertise. For example, we host the ASEAN Strategic Policy Dialogue on Disaster Management and the Senior Executive Programme in Disaster Management annually.

11 Beyond ASEAN, Singapore has also been invited to participate in the G20 Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group, sharing its expertise and experience on heat and flood resilience.

12 Global challenges—whether climate change, pandemics, or cyber threats—require collective action that transcends national boundaries. Through platforms such as the P20, we can share best practices, coordinate responses, and strengthen international frameworks for disaster management.

Lessons from Recent Challenges

13 The COVID-19 pandemic tested our systems profoundly. We learnt the importance of surge capacity in healthcare, the need for resilient supply chains, and the value of clear, consistent communication. Our parliamentary processes adapted swiftly, moving to virtual or hybrid proceedings and maintaining democratic oversight even during this period.

14 Such experiences reinforced the lesson that resilience is not a destination but a continuous journey of learning, adapting, and improving. Since then, we have strengthened pandemic preparedness, enhanced supply chain resilience, and improved our crisis communication protocols.

The Path Forward

15 The challenges ahead are formidable. Climate change is intensifying weather extremes, cyber threats are evolving rapidly, and demographic shifts are reshaping societies. Singapore is strengthening cybersecurity, investing in quantum-safe communications, and fostering resilience across all levels of society.

Conclusion

16 Distinguished colleagues, the challenges we face in building disaster resilience are complex and evolving. While Singapore’s approach must be adapted to our circumstances as a small island city-state, we are mindful that there is much we can learn from the diverse perspectives presented here.

17 We look forward to continuing this dialogue, sharing lessons, and working alongside all of you to build more resilient societies for present and future generations. In this connection, I was recently told of a Zulu proverb that would capture the spirit of our shared journey: “We build forward by asking those who have gone before us.”³

Siyabonga kakhulu [SEE-YAH-BONG-GAH KAH-KOO-LOO].⁴

Enkosi [EN-KOH-SEE].⁵ Thank you.

³ In Zulu, the saying is, *Indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili*

⁴ Thank you very much in Zulu (plural).

⁵ Thank you in Xhosa.