

# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

A full-page photograph of Mrs Christina Ong, the Chairman of the National Parks Board. She is standing in a lush, green environment, possibly a conservatory or a garden, with large, vibrant green leaves framing her. She is wearing a dark grey or black blazer over a white top and dark trousers. Her hands are clasped in front of her, and she has a slight smile. The lighting is soft and natural, highlighting the textures of the plants and her attire.

**Mrs Christina Ong**  
Chairman  
National Parks Board

The past year was one of great achievement for the National Parks Board, and in our annual self-evaluation it is appropriate to look back with pride at what we have accomplished. **But it is the work to be done that must command our attention.**

Complementing our mandate to develop is our responsibility to conserve. As Singapore's environmental steward, we must foster an urban conservation model that values the city's rich biodiversity as a strategic asset.

Our responsibilities are broad and complex, undertaken through the commitment of the management, over 700 staff and 600 volunteers of NParks, and the enthusiastic support of individuals, nature interest groups, corporate partners and sponsors, schools and other government agencies. It is only through such concerted effort that Singapore's evolution as a City in a Garden is possible.

All urban environments reflect the priorities of its residents. One of our most important jobs, therefore, is to foster a public understanding and appreciation for nature in Singapore. Three significant NParks projects in 2007/8 address this challenge. The HortPark is now Singapore's one-stop gardening hub, the Jacob Ballas Children's Garden proves that learning can be fun, and the Eastern Coastal Park Connector Network makes the journey to our eastern parks as fulfilling as the visit itself. Looking ahead, the Gardens by the Bay project, which broke ground in November 2007, will provide a new perspective on city

living in the new Downtown through three waterfront gardens. The first 54-hectare garden at Marina South is targeted to open in 2011.

We are also charged with the task of building a 'green collar' industry for Singapore. This year's launch of the Centre for Urban Greenery and Ecology (CUGE) sets the foundation for such an industry by offering structured training programmes in specialised areas such as horticulture, arboriculture and nursery management. These valuable and transferable skillsets are the building blocks of a professional and innovative workforce crucial for the success of the industry.

Complementing our mandate to develop is our responsibility to conserve. As Singapore's environmental steward, we must foster an urban conservation model that values the city's rich biodiversity as a strategic asset. A recent survey of our natural areas has not only revealed new species, but also

re-discovered species once thought to be extinct locally. These findings are significant not only for scientific purposes, but also for tourism, research and diplomacy. Hence, even though the efforts at the Chek Jawa Wetlands, the coral nursery off Pulau Semakau, and Pulau Ubin have borne fruit, they remain works in progress requiring ongoing care.

Our goal of creating a unique sustainable urban experience in which both nature and human experience are enriched has few precedents. My first twelve months as Chairman of the National Parks Board have given me a renewed appreciation for the power of cooperative imagination. We will only succeed through partnerships with the community and industry, listening and learning even as we plan and implement.

I therefore extend my sincere thanks to all members of the NParks Board for providing much needed counsel and perspective.

Joining us in the year ahead are Mr Guy Harvey-Samuel, Ms Lim Sau Hoong and Mrs Deborah Ong, new members of the Board who will contribute valuable private sector experience. They will take the places of Mr John Ho, Mr Francis Phun and Mr Daren Shiau, whom I must thank for their wise counsel and a combined 16 years of service on the Board.

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank our staff and volunteers here at NParks, whose efforts make possible the accomplishments highlighted in this Annual Report. Their passion and commitment inspire great confidence for the year ahead.

**Mrs Christina Ong**  
Chairman  
National Parks Board