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2. Foreword from the Chairman

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Foreword from the Chairman



In 1978, four art-loving and public spirited women got together to form the Friends of the National Museum. They wanted to assist the then National Museum with museum guides and children's educational programmes.

Twenty-five years later, that fledgling organisation has become a mini United Nations, with 1,300 members from over forty countries. Over three hundred members regularly volunteer their time and expertise as guides in our museums and institutions and by helping out with our outreach activities. I have often taken foreign visitors to our museums and have admired the charming and knowledgeable manner in which the docents have taken us around the exhibitions. They have always succeeded in making our visits more enjoyable and more informative.

The success of FOM has been due to good leadership, the enthusiasm of its members, their shared love of art and heritage and their willingness to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with others. FOM has also been very open to change and has responded splendidly to the many changes of the last ten years. When the National Museum evolved into three museums, FOM readily agreed to provide training and volunteers for the two new museums, Singapore Art Museum (1996) and the Asian Civilisations Museum (1997). FOM also agreed to work with the National Archives of Singapore and the Heritage Conservation Centre. More recently, it took 'Reflections at Bukit Chandu', a

World War Two interpretative centre, under its wings. When the new Asian Civilisations Museum, in Empress Place, was opened this year, a team of docents and volunteers was ready and eager to take on the challenge of guiding and helping out in the largest museum in Singapore.

I understand that FOM will take the bold step of registering as a society by the end of 2003. I salute you for yet another strategic move to respond to changes and to give your members a greater sense of ownership and legitimacy. FOM is a paradigm case of a non-governmental organisation. Its success is not only good for NHB but also for Singapore. The reason is that the new Singapore needs a vibrant civil society.

The National Heritage Board is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year. It is a year of double celebration because FOM is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary. I am confident that NHB and FOM will forge an even closer and richer relationship in the years ahead.

My congratulations to the president and the members of FOM for their many achievements during the past twenty-five years and my best wishes for many more achievements in the years ahead.

Professor Tommy Koh, Chairman, National Heritage Board