REMARKS BY MR DAVID CAMPBELL, DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER, BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION AT THE LAUNCH OF UK-SINGAPORE MATERIALS WORKSHOP ON MONDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2005

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Mr Chan Soo Sen, Minister of State for Education

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the British High Commission may I also welcome you to this UK-Singapore Materials workshop.

Events such as these take an enormous amount of work to arrange. I would like to pay tribute to Nanyang Technological University for taking on the lion’s share of the organisation. I would also like to thank A*STAR, the Institute of Materials, NUS, Rolls Royce and everyone else who has taken a part in this venture.

The UK undertakes world-leading research in the materials field. We have a large and very strong team from the UK here today representing that research. The UK team is led by Prof. John Wood, Chief Executive of the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils. We are very grateful to him for his hard work in assembling such an excellent team. I would also like to thank all the speakers, whether from near or far, who will be taking part in the event over the next few days. Without them we would not have an event at all.

This is the first event to be held under the auspices of the joint science, engineering and technology statement signed by the British and Singaporean Prime Ministers in July. We were delighted that science was given such high profile when Tony Blair visited
Singapore. I think this demonstrates the importance that both our countries attach to the science agenda. In addition to the signing of the statement Mr Blair also visited, with David Beckham, the UK-Singapore Partners in Science Sports, Science and Engineering Exhibition at the Singapore Science Centre. The exhibition has a substantial materials component and I would encourage you to visit it. You could even win a VIP trip to see Manchester United play Newcastle at Old Trafford if you enter the competition we have running there!

One of the aims of the joint Prime Ministerial statement was to help researchers in the region make connections and to help build scientific capacity in South East Asia. This is the first event that we have opened to researchers from countries in the region. I am therefore delighted that we have researchers from Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Brunei and Vietnam attending this event. An especially warm welcome to you all.

Another aim set out in the Prime Ministerial statement was to expose more young people to the leading-edge science in our countries. I am therefore particularly pleased to see so many young people in the audience and that the Institute of Materials East Asia has run a poster competition in association with the workshop. We are also grateful to the Institute of Materials for recognising this workshop for Continuing Professional Development. That is certainly a first for an activity run by the British High Commission.

We have a number of strands to this workshop – including, I was pleased to see, on Materials for Clean Energy Systems. As you may know the UK has the Presidency of both the G8 countries and the European Union at present. One of the key issues for the UK is to promote action on Climate Change. Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the world today. Defining how much climate change is too much, is a political, as well as a scientific question, but one which needs to be guided by the best objective information that science can give. We are therefore running, with the British Council, a series of events in Singapore on Climate Change. As part of this series, I
had the pleasure of speaking recently at the same event as Prof. Colin Humphreys of Cambridge University, and a former President of the Institute of Materials. Colin gave a stimulating talk about how advances in materials science could help to mitigate the effects of climate change.

We also have members of the UK’s Materials Innovation and Growth team in Singapore this week. This joint Government and Industry forum has been set up to identify the challenges and opportunities facing the UK materials industry over the next 10 to 20 years. It will also look at the issues most likely to shape the future of sector and how the UK should best respond to meet those developments. They will be attending this workshop and visiting a number of research institutes and companies over the next few weeks. May I take this opportunity of thanking A*STAR for their help in arranging their programme and everyone else involved in hosting their visits.

The ultimate aim of workshops such as this is to encourage greater collaboration. To explore new ideas. To learn about new techniques. To gain a glimpse of what the future might hold for us. I very much hope that this workshop will lead to new connections between researchers from the UK, Singapore and other countries in the region.

Thank you.