

## Opening Keynote Speech by SMS(C&I) Dr Janil Puthucheary at GSMA M360 APAC 2022 on 2 Aug 2022

### Building Singapore's Digital Future

Good morning everybody.

#### **Introduction**

1. It is my pleasure to start this morning's discussions on "Building Digital Nations".
2. COVID-19 has accelerated digital adoption across the world. Emerging technologies and their applications are improving lives and livelihoods but they bring with them attendant challenges. Governments and industry increasingly need to work together to maximise the benefits and concurrently manage the risks of digitalisation, all of which transcends geographical boundaries.
3. In this regard, the Mobile 360 Asia Pacific is an important event. It continues to bring together public and private sector leaders within the digital domain from across nations, presenting a valuable platform, driving learning and collaboration.

#### **Singapore's vision of a digital future**

4. For Singapore, we want two major outcomes for our digital future.
  - a. First, we have to maximise the benefits of digitalisation, allowing our enterprises to use technology to grow, to seize new opportunities, and to create more good jobs for our workforce. We need our people to participate meaningfully in the digital society.
  - b. Second, we need to find ways to manage the challenges and risks of digitalisation. Online safety, cybersecurity, data protection, and system integrity need to be upheld. This is vital as it preserves trust, and trust is the bedrock of our digital future. Only with that sense of trust will people have confidence to transact digitally, to engage in the digital ecosystem, and drive enterprise innovation to develop the ecosystem even further.

#### **Realising our digital future**

5. To achieve these, multi-faceted interventions and multiple stakeholders across different domains are needed. First, for us, we need to make early investments to ensure the continued relevance of our underlying digital infrastructure. This forms the bedrock and basis of innovative solutions that we need to develop, deliver and deploy.
  - a. 5G is a case in point. The rollout of our standalone networks is on track; and at the same time, we are working with various enterprises - many of whom are represented in this room - to develop and scale up 5G use cases. An example is APAC's first holomedicine project by the National University



Health System (NUHS). It employs mixed reality for enhanced clinical care. NUHS and partners will be sharing more about this in a separate session tomorrow.

6. Looking even further ahead, Singapore recognises the need to drive research in digital technologies that have transformative potential.
  - a. We are investing S\$25 billion in our Research, Innovation and Enterprise 2025 Plan. This focuses on driving technology translation and strengthening the innovation capabilities of our enterprises.
    - i. An example is our investment of close to S\$70 million in the Future Communications R&D Programme. Through industry collaborations and technical trials, the programme allows us to better understand, develop capabilities, and reap the potential benefits of technologies such as Open Radio Access Networks.
    - ii. We also recently announced a S\$50 million investment in the Digital Trust Centre to drive research and innovation in trust technologies, which are key to many of our ambitions within the digital space.
7. As we enhance our infrastructure and research capabilities, we also need to, in parallel, review our regulatory frameworks in a consultative and collaborative manner to keep pace with technological advancements. This includes learning from international partners, engaging the industry to understand tech trends and business models, and understanding our people's needs.
  - a. This approach, which is balanced between our digital infrastructure development and our focus on economic growth and innovation - while maintaining social stability, digital security, and environmental sustainability - will take us forward in a way that brings everyone with us.
8. Our next area of focus is building digital capabilities so that our enterprises and workforce can maximise their opportunities within the digital economy.
  - a. We have been and will continue to support SMEs in their digital transformation, to boost their productivity and competitiveness, and help Singaporean businesses access new markets. For example, the Chief Technology Officer-as-a-Service initiative provides SMEs access to digital solutions appropriate to their business needs, and digital consultancy services to empower them in raising their digital maturity.
  - b. Key to many of our ambitions is our human capability development. We have been working with industry and educational institutions to nurture a pipeline of local tech talent equipped to access employment opportunities in new tech areas, while ensuring that the skills of our existing ICT workforce remain relevant amid rapid changes. For example, the 5G academy has upskilled over 4,000 individuals locally for higher-value roles.

9. Lastly, and just as importantly, we are deepening collaborations with other Governments and industry partners globally and regionally.
  - a. We deeply understand that a global digital framework that is interoperable, resilient, and secure across borders is in our interest, just as it is in the interest of our international partners. It will facilitate cross-border innovation in emerging technologies and their applications. In achieving this, we have to work bilaterally with other countries, including through Digital Economy Agreements, as well as regionally and multilaterally, using platforms such as ASEAN.

### **Conclusion**

10. I hope this very rapid sketch gives you some sense of how we are approaching the ideas and challenges to build a digital nation here in Singapore. I think we can spend some time thinking about each of these ideas, and I'm looking forward to our fireside chat and the questions that you may have to explore some of these ideas.
11. With that, I wish you a wonderful event and thank you very much for taking the time to travel here to Singapore and join us for this.