**Transcript of Speech delivered by Mr Tan Kiat How,
Senior Minister of State,
Ministry of Communications and Information,
at SCS Women in Tech (WIT) Seminar on "Champion Change For A Better Future" (20 Feb 2023)**

Mr. Sam Liew, President of the Singapore Computer Society,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Good afternoon.

2. Very happy to see all of you again. I just last attended the "Ready for Boardroom" seminar in September 2022, and I am very happy to see all of you again.

3. Let us first acknowledge the very good progress we have made towards an inclusive tech sector.

4. We launched the SG Women in Tech movement in 2019, working very closely with the industry to attract more women to join the sector. This movement has since reached more than 120,000 people. It is a tremendous effort and what really heartens me every time I attend one of your Women in Tech events is that I see so much passion, excitement, commitment, and really deep care and concern about this topic. Our tech companies have been generally more inclusive compared to international benchmarks. More than 2 in 5 of Singapore's tech professionals are women, well above the global average.

5. This is also the result of initiatives over the years that comprehensively develops interest and talent in tech at different stages.

6. First, we seek to build a good foundation in our schools. Interest in tech is encouraged through STEM subjects, CCAs such as Infocomm Club, coding competitions, and other skills development initiatives. IMDA's Girls in Tech movement has reached over 700 students, seeding an interest to pursue tech as a career.

7. Next, at our Institutes of Higher Learning, we have created pathways for the next generation of women in tech to deepen their skills. Around 4 in 10 students enrolled in STEM disciplines at Autonomous Universities, Polytechnics, and ITE are female. Through initiatives like the Promotion of Women in Engineering, Research, and Science (POWERS) Programme, launched by President Halimah in 2021, we are working with NTU to build the next generation of female leaders in STEM.

8. Finally, we have partnered companies who are committed to empowering women in tech. It is important to grow more awareness among our companies to foster a positive environment for women to develop as professionals in this sector. One important initiative is the SG Women in Tech Corporate Pledge, which encourages companies to create better support systems for women. I'm very heartened to see that to date, 64 companies including MNCs and local unicorns have come on board with concrete measures to do so.

9. While we have made good progress, some of you may be wondering, what recent developments in the global tech industry mean.

10. Geopolitical tensions, over-hiring in the past few years by some tech companies, and other macro-economic uncertainties have led to global retrenchments.
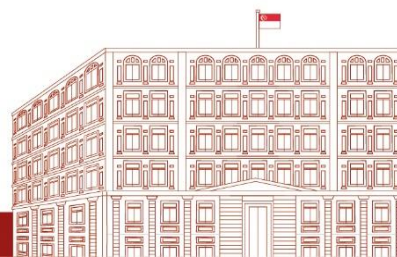
11. Are there still opportunities for women in tech?

12. What we are confident of is that digitalisation will continue to re-shape our economy in the long-term. Tech talent is still in demand across the economy in Singapore. While some tech companies had experienced contractions, companies in other sectors – such as banking and insurance – are still looking to hire people with tech skills. Various recruitment firms and job platforms have continued to highlight continued demand for tech skills such as full stack development, data analytics, cybersecurity, and cloud automation.

13. Hence, we will continue to support our workforce in acquiring and deepening industry-relevant tech skills. The Government is committed to ensure that such upskilling and re-skilling opportunities are accessible to all Singaporeans of all backgrounds.

14. Since its inception in 2016, IMDA's Tech Skills Accelerator, or TeSA, has trained and placed more than 13,000 individuals into good tech jobs. Another 180,000 have been trained in tech skills in emerging areas such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and data analytics. We will provide further updates on our initiatives at the upcoming Committee of Supply (COS) debates.

15. Our efforts go way beyond the workplace, to reach the next generation in developing industry-relevant tech skills. Since 2018, IMDA has collaborated with Apple to train students from Infocomm Media Clubs across Singapore to develop mobile app prototypes. There are also more advanced projects like integrating Machine Learning and Augmented Reality into their prototypes. Some students have published their own iOS app on the Apple App Store.

16. Tech talent will continue to be an important driver for the growth of our digital economy. Hence, we should look ahead and double down in building a vibrant and inclusive tech workforce. The evidence shows clear benefits. Research shows that companies with greater gender diversity are associated with higher R&D intensity. McKinsey found that companies with at least 30% of female executives performed better than the norm.

17. In this regard, I am pleased to see the Singapore Computer Society (SCS) and the Singapore Institute of Directors (SID) taking further steps to develop pathways for female tech professionals and tech leaders. Today, the two organisations will be launching a specially curated Board Readiness Programme for women in technology. I would also like to acknowledge SCS' long-standing support in partnering IMDA on the SG100 Women in Tech list, recognising women who have made significant contributions to Singapore's tech industry. They represent important role models for the next generation.

18. But outside of formal commitments and programmes by companies, all of us also have a role to play. HR practitioners and hiring managers: I request your commitment to seek out a more diverse pool of applicants. Team leaders and people managers: You play a crucial role in grooming and mentoring the next generation of female leaders. I encourage you to think about how to adapt your management practices to accommodate the different backgrounds and communication styles required of a diverse range of people in your teams.

19. All of us here have a part to play in shaping and working together to achieve the kind of society that we aspire to realise. On my part, I certainly hope it will be one that we can be inclusive even while we pursue excellence, and where our diversity is our strength.

20. Let me conclude by noting that our progress in building an inclusive tech sector could not have happened without the cooperation and support of industry players and individuals like all of
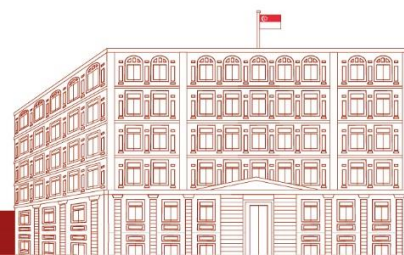
you. Thank you very much for your support and commitment. I am very grateful for your perseverance and your continued passion in this area.

21. I encourage all of you to join in on our wider conversations such as through the ForwardSG discussions, or the Women in Tech conversations at Asia Tech x Singapore later this year. I am certain that our conversations will be that much richer with your voices joining in the mix.

22. On that note, I wish all of you a wonderful seminar and the panel discussion later on. I look forward to working closely and partnering with all of you, as we embark on this exciting and important journey for all of us. Thank you so much for inviting me this afternoon.