

## **Speech by Minister for Communications and Information S Iswaran, at the Launch of Microsoft's #GetReadySG Programme on 10 December 2020**

Ms Andrea Della Mattea, President, Microsoft Asia Pacific  
Distinguished guests  
Ladies and gentlemen

### **Introduction**

1. Good afternoon to everyone here, including those joining us virtually. Thank you for inviting me to celebrate this happy occasion with you. It has been three decades since Microsoft began its operations here as a three-person outfit in 1990. The company and the Singapore office have come a long way since. Microsoft Singapore is now the company's Asia Headquarters with about 1,200 employees.

2. As we celebrate your 30th anniversary, I want to thank Microsoft for your long-standing partnership with us; one that is anchored on trust and continuous collaboration. Over the years, Microsoft has made significant contributions to the growth of our infocomm and tech (ICT) sector as well as the broader ecosystem. Most recently in October, Microsoft announced its partnership with Grab to provide training and development programmes in tech-related skills for Grab's driver- and delivery-partners, as well as tertiary students. When COVID-19 struck, Microsoft stepped forward to lend support to our national effort to combat the pandemic. During the several months of school closures, Microsoft donated laptops and tablets to support home-based learning for families-in-need. The company also collaborated with IMDA in setting up Virtual Digital Clinics to teach seniors how to use digital tools to stay connected amidst the pandemic.

### **The ICT sector remains resilient despite significant headwinds**

3. The growth of Microsoft's operations in Singapore mirrors the broader growth of our ICT sector. In recent years, the sector has grown exponentially in size and importance. This year, perhaps more than ever, has accentuated the sector's critical role in supporting social and business continuity in turbulent conditions. In the midst of lockdowns and safe distancing requirements, digital technologies have enabled businesses to sustain operations, children to continue their education, and individuals to keep in touch with their loved ones.

4. 2020 also demonstrated the promise of the ICT sector in unlocking new opportunities for individuals and businesses. While much of the economy has experienced challenges, it has stayed resilient. In the Ministry of Trade and Industry's most recent economic survey report, the infocomm sector was one of two sectors in

the services industry to post positive year-on-year growth in the third quarter of 2020 - the other being finance and insurance. Digital and tech roles continue to be in strong demand, not only within ICT, but also across the rest of the economy as all sectors seek digital solutions. The ICT sector will continue to be an engine of transformation and growth for the wider economy, and generate many exciting opportunities for our companies and workers.

### **#GetReadySG will provide exciting jobs and skills training opportunities**

5. For our people to take full advantage of these opportunities and secure good jobs as demand grows, we must equip them with the right skills.

6. To this end, I am pleased to announce that Microsoft will launch the "Get Ready SG" programme today, under the SGUnited Jobs and Skills package. The programme is a collaboration between Microsoft, nonprofit training platform Generation, IMDA, and SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG). It will create up to 1,000 jobs and skills training positions for fresh graduates and mid-career professionals. It is a partnership that marries the know-how and expertise of the private sector with the networks and resources of the public sector. This is precisely the kind of partnerships that we envision with the public and private sectors, working in close collaboration.

7. Under the Get Ready SG programme, participants can look forward to acquiring in-demand tech skills such as computer programming, and accessing opportunities across Microsoft's partner network in core and emerging technologies such as software development, cloud operations, and data analytics. These roles will come with vocational and on-the-job training, and are open to all Singaporeans, regardless of their academic or professional backgrounds.

### **The Government will continue to partner with industry to create opportunities for workers**

8. The Get Ready SG programme is part of the Government's larger effort to collaborate with industry to create meaningful and exciting opportunities for workers. Our partnerships have already borne fruit.

9. Since April this year, more than 7,000 jobseekers have been placed in jobs, company-hosted traineeships and attachments, as well as training places in the ICT sector. As of early-November, there were more than 20,000 available openings in ICT under the SGUnited Jobs and Skills Package, of which more than 12,000 were full-time jobs. The programme announced today will add a further 1,000 jobs and skills opportunities for Singaporeans, bringing the total number of openings over the 21,000 mark.

10. Most notably, these opportunities cater to the wide spectrum of training and job seekers, including undergraduates, fresh graduates, and mid-career professionals. They span the gamut from tech-lite roles such as digital marketing specialists and customer success managers, to jobs that require a deeper level of technology skills, such as software engineers and developers. We will continue to ensure that our people remain at the heart of the growth of the ICT sector. We are glad that companies such as Microsoft have rallied to join us in this endeavour, and look forward to more fruitful collaborations in the year ahead.

## **Conclusion**

11. As we approach the end of 2020, it is fitting that we reflect on the immense upheaval that the world has gone through this year, with millions of lives and livelihoods affected, entire regions entering lockdown, and economies coming under immense stress. Singapore has not been spared as we face our deepest economic contraction since independence.

12. The fight against COVID-19 is far from over, and there is still much to be done. Like other countries, Singapore is carefully and conscientiously building the foundations for a strong post-pandemic recovery. As I have outlined today, the ICT sector is a key component of our efforts in this regard, and the work that we are doing with Microsoft, and many other partners in this sector, is going to be the pillars of the efforts. Our progress thus far attests to what we can achieve when the people, private, and public sector partners unite in common cause in a time of crisis. The terrain ahead may be challenging and uncertain, but I have every confidence that if we work together, stay resilient, reinvent ourselves, and seize the opportunities that lie ahead, we will certainly emerge stronger.

13. Thank you, and once again, I wish the Microsoft team a happy 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.