

**TRANSCRIPT OF REMARKS BY MS RAHAYU MAHZAM, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION AT P&G WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS ACADEMY ONLINE GRADUATION CEREMONY(SINGAPORE) ON WEDNESDAY, 16 MARCH 2022**

Ms Balaka Niyazee, Senior Vice President, P&G Korea and Executive Sponsor for Gender Equality, Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa

Dr Hsien-Hsien Lei, Chief Executive Officer, The American Chambers of Commerce in Singapore

Ms Minnie Venkatachalam, Regional Director for Southeast Asia and Oceania, WEConnect International

19 Women Entrepreneurs from the 2022 Cohort

Ladies and Gentlemen

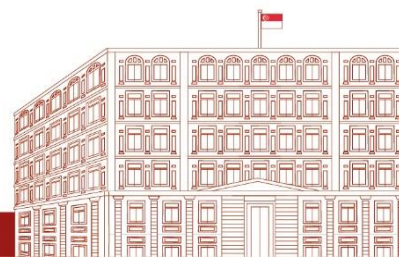
1. Good afternoon everyone. Many thanks to all of you for having me at this event and I'm pleased to be part of the journey for the 19 women entrepreneurs who will be graduating from the fourth edition of the P&G Women Entrepreneurs Academy in Singapore.

2. I would like to begin by congratulating all 19 entrepreneurs for successfully completing the 2022 Singapore's Edition of the Women Entrepreneurs Academy. You represent a wide and diverse range of sectors, such as fashion, health foods, fertility tests, and social causes to build financial literacy and render support for other female entrepreneurs. All of you have put in many hours of hard work, across 9 sessions to develop your skills such as in business operations, company branding, sales, etc, in spite of your busy schedule.

3. Businesses have faced challenges amidst the ongoing pandemic, including SMEs which employ a majority of Singapore's workers. I am sure it was not easy the past two years to adapt and change your business processes to deal with these challenges.

4. I'm heartened to see the women business community taking your own active steps to upskill and improve. I am confident that your time at the Academy has been a fruitful one. More importantly, I hope that more women will be inspired to venture into entrepreneurship and build successful and sustainable enterprises.

5. It is one of the Government's key priorities to build fair, inclusive and progressive workplaces and reduce and remove barriers that hinder women's career progression.



6. This is in line with some of the feedback that came up during the year-long, nationwide Conversations on Singapore Women's Development that the Government completed with our community partners last year. 160 Conversations were held with nearly 6,000 people from various walks of life. Feedback and ideas are being incorporated into a White Paper that will be presented in Parliament soon.

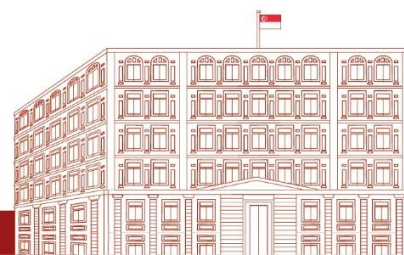
7. One salient feedback was on equality at the workplace. There was a strong desire for women to have more equal opportunities in the workplace, to be supported in their career aspirations, and to be better able to juggle work and family duties. While there might not be outright discrimination in their workplaces, women can feel that they have been passed over for opportunities or promotions due to caregiving responsibilities.

- a. To address this, the Government is considering incorporating the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices in law, as announced by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the National Day Rally in 2021. This will enable more women to participate fully in the workplace.

8. Women also often shoulder a heavier caregiving load compared to men, and sometimes this may come at a cost to their well-being and careers. Another priority area the Government is looking at is to explore ways to care for our caregivers and recognise their sacrifices and contributions. We will step up support to ease the caregiving load and care for the well-being of caregivers.

9. In the Conversations on Singapore Women's Development, participants shared their aspirations for a society where men and women partnered each other and contributed more equally to caregiving and household responsibilities at home. Indeed, our caregivers play an indispensable role in our society, and we should all do our part to support them as much as we can.

10. For instance, as women entrepreneurs and employers, many of you juggle commitments on both work and home fronts. You have to be constantly available for your family, your staff and your clients. Because of this, I am sure that you are also best placed to empathise with other women who may be going through similar situations, juggling many things on their plate.



- a. I hope that with your experience and what you have learnt through your journey, you will also become a mentor to others, and find ways to uplift them. Take the support and investment others have put in you and pass it on to others and help them succeed.
- b. This can be done through many ways such as being a mentor, having networking programmes, sharing your experience, or by implementing family-friendly workplace policies.

11. Corporates can also do their part to support and develop women who wish to return to work or budding women leaders, just as P&G, and WEConnect International are doing for the Women Entrepreneurs Academy.

12. In 2021, we also celebrated the Year of Celebrating SG Women to mark the achievements and continued progress of Singapore women. This year, we can look forward to the next bound of progress for Singapore women's development. The White Paper on Singapore Women's Development will be presented in Parliament soon. The White Paper represents our shared vision for a fairer and more inclusive society, where men and women partner each other as equals, and both can pursue their aspirations freely and to the fullest. It is our collective ground-up effort and partnership to hear feedback, implement changes and make a difference in the lives of Singapore women.

13. In conclusion, I wish all the graduates all the best in your entrepreneurship journey. I am sure the knowledge gained will allow you to continue to excel in your careers, and hope you will pass on the experience on to budding women entrepreneurs.

14. Together, we can make Singapore a fairer and more inclusive society for all. Thank you.

