SCCCI 120TH ANNIVERSARY GALA DINNER
SPEECH BY SCCCI PRESIDENT KHO CHOON KENG
30 OCTOBER 2026
RAFFLES CITY CONVENTION CENTRE

Mr Lawrence Wong, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance,

Cabinet Ministers, Ministers of State, Members of Parliament and Senior Government Officials,

Business leaders from Singapore and overseas,

SCCCI Honorary Presidents,

Senior Honorary Council Members,

Honorary Council Members,

Council Members and Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening!

1. Tonight, it is our great honour to celebrate the 120th anniversary of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCCI) with all of you. I would like to extend my warmest welcome and greetings to everyone!

I. The History and Enduring Spirit of Singapore's Chinese Entrepreneurs

2. Over the past 120 years, SCCCI has witnessed the journey of our forefathers who embarked on arduous journeys to come to Singapore, worked tirelessly to build their businesses, and grew alongside our nation. Through the colonial era, World War II, fight for citizenship rights and Singapore's independence, our forefathers

overcame countless challenges. Their hard work and perseverance not only laid a strong foundation for Singapore's economy, but also embodied the selfless spirit of giving back to society and investing in education, guided by the principle of "Benefitting from Society, Giving Back to Society". Let us pay our highest tribute to the pioneer generation of Chinese entrepreneurs and our past SCCCI leaders tonight!

3. In every chapter of our history, SCCCI upholds the core beliefs of the Chinese Entrepreneurial Spirit — patriotism, integrity, succession, innovation and uniting businesses. These core beliefs remind us that, even as our nation prospers and our people enjoy a better quality of life today, we must never lose the spirit of hard work and dedication to society exemplified by our forefathers. This also resonates with our Singapore Spirit of "We First", which PM Wong has spoken about on numerous occasions!

4. I would therefore like to express my heartfelt appreciation to PM Wong for introducing policies and initiatives to preserve and strengthen our local Chinese culture and heritage. These include support for the development of the Chinese Community Leadership Programme (CCLP), plans to establish the Singapore Chinese Heritage Gallery, and efforts to promote the use of dialects in ways that remain relevant today. The Government's foresight and thoughtful planning play a vital role in preserving and passing on the cultural values that are part of our heritage. As the Chinese saying goes, "It takes ten years to grow trees, but a hundred years to nurture people". The benefits of investing in future generations will be immeasurable!

II. The Global Community of Chinese Entrepreneurs: Harmony in Diversity, Charting the Future Together

5. SCCCI's 120-year journey is also a story of how Singapore's Chinese entrepreneurs have progressively expanded their international presence and forged connections around the world.

We are grateful to welcome leaders and representatives of Chinese business organisations from across the region to join us in celebrating this milestone!

6. In 1991, with the support of Founding Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew, SCCCI founded the inaugural World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention (WCEC). While times may change, I firmly believe that as long as Chinese entrepreneurs around the world uphold integrity, pursue mutual benefit and respect one another's differences in the spirit of “Harmony in Diversity”, we will continue to achieve shared success and prosperity!

7. Tonight's Gala Dinner demonstrates that, even amid global uncertainty and turmoil, the Asia-Pacific region can continue to enjoy harmonious relations and support one another. This should never be taken for granted. It is the fruit of years of dedication and hard work, guided by the Chinese Entrepreneurial Spirit! This year, SCCCI also established its International Advisory Panel to bring together the insights and expertise of international business leaders. The panel will provide our members with forward-looking insights into global markets and help to create new opportunities for all! As Singapore assumes the ASEAN Chairmanship next year, we look forward to seizing this opportunity to work hand in hand with all to build a more prosperous, stable and sustainable region!

III. The Age of Artificial Intelligence and the Chinese Entrepreneurial Spirit

8. Today, we live in a rapidly changing and increasingly uncertain world. While technological advancements are accelerating, geopolitical tensions and conflicts are intensifying, the threat of global warming is growing, and demographic shifts are reshaping societies. These developments are having a profound impact on Singapore and countries around the world.

9. Among these changes, I believe one of the questions that concerns us most is the impact of the AI revolution. Higher education, the way we work, as well as productivity itself will all be reshaped in the years ahead. AI is no longer an option that we can choose to accept or reject; it is a question that every country, every society and every economy must answer. Yet, as the Chinese saying reminds us, "The same water that keeps a boat afloat can also sink it". While AI promises tremendous gains in efficiency and prosperity, it also brings challenges relating to ethics, security, the environment and much more.

10. We are grateful that PM Wong is personally leading the National AI Council, which provides strategic direction and drives Singapore's AI agenda. SCCCI will fully support our nation's efforts to keep pace with the times and embrace the future!

11. As technology advances and improves our standard of living, we must also keep our cultural values firmly rooted so that Singapore remains a society built on justice, compassion and mutual trust. Recent news reports have highlighted the US Government's move to rebrand AI as "SI", or "Super Intelligence". Major tech companies in the West have also begun to emphasise the importance of building trust. As Singapore continues to develop AI, we must not lose sight of the importance of our cultural values to our nation's continued success. Perhaps we should also consider developing "SSI" — "Singapore-Spirit Intelligence" — in other words, AI that embodies our Singapore Spirit?

12. Ladies and Gentlemen, our 120-year journey has taught us that lasting success is measured not only by the wealth we create, but also by the values and spirit we leave behind for society and future generations, and by whether we can improve people's lives and create more opportunities for them.

13. On this special occasion marking SCCCI's 120th anniversary, I would like to share three key realisations and guiding direction that the 62nd Council and I have drawn from our journey:

a. First, SCCCI has journeyed through 120 years. We must draw on the wealth of experience accumulated over these years and not allow our history and past achievements to make us complacent. As the saying goes, "One is only as good as yesterday". This new milestone inspires and motivates us to remember our roots, and work together with unity and determination.

b. Second, the wisdom of classical Chinese philosophy continues to offer valuable lessons for our world today. The *I Ching* (Book of Changes) teaches that "The interaction of yin and yang constitutes the Way" and that "When Heaven and Earth interact, all things flourish". The *Analects* similarly teaches: "If you wish to establish yourself, help others to establish themselves; if you wish to achieve your goals, help others to achieve theirs". This wisdom passed down through history reminds us that a world centred solely on self-interest cannot achieve lasting prosperity. While pursuing our own interests, we must also seek to benefit others, creating an ecosystem in which all parties can meet their needs and prosper together. Singapore has always advocated a rules-based international order and the spirit of "Harmony in Diversity" in international relations. These principles lay an important foundation for fostering prosperity and good relations among nations!

c. Third, regardless of how the world evolves or what new technologies emerge after the age of AI, one fundamental truth will remain: we live in a human society, and each of us has a responsibility towards humanity as a whole. We must put people at the centre and put people first — not in the sense of prioritising individuals at the expense of others, but of placing the well-being of people at the heart of our progress. A thriving society needs laws and rules, but it also needs cultural values, inclusivity and care for the community. This is why SCCCI's longstanding

commitment to promoting the Chinese Entrepreneurial Spirit remains so important for the future.

14. In closing, I would like to once again express my heartfelt gratitude to all for joining us tonight and for your unwavering support for SCCCI. May SCCCI continue to flourish for many years to come! I wish all our distinguished guests good health and great success in your business! Thank you.

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