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**SPEECH BY MS GRACE FU, MINISTER FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT, AT SCCCI'S INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT
“BEING 我(WO) MEN” ON 6 MARCH 2022**

Mr Roland Ng, President of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCCI),

Dr Hwang Yee Cheau, Chairperson of SCCCI Career Women's Group,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

INTRODUCTION

1. A very good evening to all of you. I am grateful to be invited once again to SCCCI's Career Women's Group International Women's Day Conference. This is an important event which unites women across professions and industries to discuss how we can support and improve conditions for women in the workplace.
2. The theme of this year's International Women's Conference is “Being

我(women)”。 It is a clever way to set the tone for the discussions tonight. How can women balance multiple expectations, achieving their personal aspirations, societal and familial roles?

FOSTERING EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

3. 2021 was designated by the Government as the Year of Celebrating SG Women. Together with our community partners, we organised 160 Conversations on Singapore Women’s Development, engaging nearly 6,000 participants across Singapore. I’m happy to note that the SCCCI CWG organised one such conversation, conducting a survey of women in the workforce with your corporate members.

4. Some feedback that came up during the Conversations was that women wanted more equal opportunities in the workplace, to be supported in their career aspirations, and to be better able to juggle work and family duties. We need to build fair, inclusive and progressive workplaces and remove barriers that hinder women’s career progression. 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.

5. 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 provide women with greater protection and enable more women to participate fully in the workplace. The Government is also exploring 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. Employers and colleagues can also do their part by being understanding towards those who need flexible work arrangements due to their caregiving commitments, and contribute to a more understanding culture in the workplace.

6. In the Conversations, women also shared their hopes for a society where women feel safe and respected. The safety of women and girls is a top priority to us, and the Government takes a strong stance against violence and harm, including in the workplace. All of us have a part to play in building a culture of respect and safety in our community. More information will be in the White Paper that will be presented to Parliament in the coming months.

7. Laws and policies are only part of the solution. A whole-of-society effort by families, companies and community partners is required to engender a mindset shift to overcome gender stereotypes and collectively advance Singapore women's development. Employers also must recognise the value of employing women in their organisations, as women represents an invaluable human resource, gender diversity makes organisations more

innovative, profitable, and better able to retain talented employees.

WOMEN AND SUSTAINABILITY

8. This year's theme for International Women's Day is 'Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow'. Beyond the economic and social realms, environmental sustainability is catching on as a major driver of change. The world has seen increased momentum for climate action after the Glasgow Climate Pact was signed at the United Nations Climate Change Conference last year. Around the world, women are leading the charge in our fight against climate change, lending their expertise as scientists, engineers and heads of NGOs.

9. According to an OECD report, women tend to be more sensitive to environmental concerns, and are more likely to recycle, minimise wastage and practise sustainable consumption habits. Studies also show that women are taking a greater share in major decision-making, such as financial investments like ESG investing, as well as property and vehicle purchases. With all these in mind, we can see how important it is to engage this increasingly influential sector.

10. In Singapore, we too are seeing more women getting involved in sustainability. Many of the Chief Sustainability Officer positions, in companies such as SGX, City Developments Limited, and Capitaland, are held

by women. Women have also organized themselves to champion sustainability. One such group is Women in Sustainability and Environment, or WISE. WISE was founded last year with the goal of advocating for women in the sustainability space, whether they are consumers, investors, or professionals. This is an excellent example of how women can be positive influencers in driving change on the ground. I hope to see more women step forward to champion such ground-up initiatives.

11. I believe many of you are passionate about sustainability and have fresh and innovative ideas to achieve our goal for a low-carbon society. I encourage you to transform your ideas into action. You can start small within your network or community and build your ideas over time. If you need support, you can tap on government funds such as my Ministry's SG Eco Fund to get your initiative started. The process to apply is simple, and co-funding of up to \$1 million is available.

CONCLUSION

12. Finally, I would like to thank the SCCCI Career Women's Group for being an important partner in supporting women's welfare, and their contributions towards making Singapore a fairer and more inclusive society. I also thank the leadership of SCCCI for recognizing the potential of women in contributing to the business and society of Singapore, and the support given to the Career Women's Group. I look forward to a successful International

Women's Day Conference 2022, and hearing tonight's panel discussions on how we can do more for women.

13. Thank you.