

OPENING OF SMEICC CONFERENCE 2026
WELCOME ADDRESS BY
SCCCI PRESIDENT KHO CHOON KENG
5 AUGUST 2026
SUNTEC CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE

尊敬的国家发展部长徐芳达先生，
各国外交使节、政府部门长官，
总商会董事及会员，
海内外嘉宾，
女士们、先生们，

大家早上好！

1. 我谨代表新加坡中华总商会，热烈欢迎大家出席“第29届中小型企业大会”，特别是远道而来的海外嘉宾朋友们，在此向各位表示由衷感谢！
2. 本届大会的主题为“深化伙伴协作：共启增长新格局”。当前，复杂的国际局势、地缘政治冲突、气候变化和通货膨胀等因素，给全球经济和商业环境带来了巨大的不确定

性；据挪威奥斯陆和平研究所¹的统计，去年全球国家间的冲突数量，已超越过1946年第二次世界大战结束以来的最高水平，这是触目惊心的！

3. 在这样的局势下，没有任何一个国家或企业能够独善其身，而加强区域内的互信、团结与协作，以及维持供应链的稳定，比以往任何时候都更加紧迫。
4. 今年适逢总商会庆祝成立120周年以及明年新加坡担任亚细安轮值主席国，非常感谢亚细安各中华总商会的会长及代表拨冗莅临；因此我们今年的东南亚华商领袖的炉边对话，有总商会的会长一起分享心得，意义重大！同时来自海内外的企业领袖和专家，也以这平台，凝聚智慧，共同探讨如何深化区域合作，携手开创可持续增长的新格局和新机遇！
5. 希望大家珍惜接下来的两天，通过彼此智慧火花的碰撞，获得宝贵的启发，让企业在今天复杂多变的环境中脱颖而出，再创辉煌！

接下来，请允许我以英语发言。

¹ 挪威奥斯陆和平研究所（PRIO）发布的年度《冲突趋势》报告显示，去年全球共发生 65 场涉及至少一个国家的冲突，是自 1946 年以来的新高。（<https://www.zaobao.com.sg/news/world/story20260609-9178953>）

Good morning Minister Chee, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

6. This year marks both the 29th edition of SMEICC and the 120th anniversary of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCCI). Over the years, SMEICC has grown into Singapore's leading bilingual business conference, providing businesses and SMEs with a trusted platform to exchange ideas, strengthen capabilities, foster partnerships and explore new opportunities. As SCCCI celebrates this milestone, we remain committed to supporting businesses in navigating change and enabling sustainable growth.

7. The theme, "Beyond Partnerships: Where Growth Comes Next", reflects today's business reality. Sustainable growth is driven by trusted partnerships, innovation, stronger capabilities and collaboration across borders. Businesses that embrace change, harness technology and build resilient networks will be better positioned to thrive and succeed.

8. Earlier this year, our Government released its Economic Strategy Review (ESR in short), outlining recommendations

to strengthen Singapore's competitiveness, reinforce our economic resilience and position our businesses for the future. These priorities are closely reflected in SMEICC 2026, which focuses on enterprise transformation, AI adoption, internationalisation, workforce development and new growth opportunities.

ASEAN: Growth through Regional Collaboration

9. Amid growing global uncertainties, Southeast Asia remains one of the world's most dynamic growth regions and is expected to be the 4th largest economy by 2030. As Singapore prepares to assume the ASEAN Chairmanship next year, there will be greater opportunities to deepen regional cooperation and strengthen economic partnerships.
10. Reflecting this regional focus, SMEICC brings together Presidents and leaders of Chinese Chambers from across Southeast Asia for this year's fireside chat. Their experiences and perspectives will provide valuable guidance and inspiration for enterprises looking to expand and succeed in the region.

SCCCI's 2026 Annual Business Survey: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities

11. I will now share highlights from this year's SCCCI Annual Business Survey.
12. First, the survey results reveal that businesses are adopting a more cautious outlook amid an increasingly complex environment — 38% of respondents indicated they are neither optimistic nor pessimistic, while 34% expressed their pessimism with just 20% being optimistic. Reflecting this cautious sentiment, only 34% of respondents expect revenue growth this year, down from 39% last year. Also, while 78% of respondents expect to be profitable this year, 56% of them expect profits to be lower than last year. At the same time, rising business costs remain a pressing concern for 80% of our respondents, a significant increase from 65% last year.
13. Similar to last year, the top 3 concerns of businesses for this year are: (1) Rising business costs; (2) Availability of suitable manpower; and (3) Transforming their business and pivoting to growth areas. While businesses recognise the importance of transformation, the key challenges they face are: (1) Uncertainties about the outcome of

transformation; (2) Lack of know-how on strategising and developing action plans to transform; as well as (3) Lack of capital and funding.

14. On AI adoption, 45% of respondents indicated they are experimenting with off-the-shelf AI tools as a first step towards broader AI integration into their businesses; with key challenges include: (1) Unsure how to use AI in a comprehensive rather than piecemeal manner; (2) Lack of in-house expertise to drive and implement AI solutions; and (3) the cost of AI adoption.

15. On internationalisation, the top 5 markets of interest to businesses are respectively Malaysia, Indonesia, China, Vietnam, and Thailand, and the rationales for pivoting towards Southeast Asia this year: (1) Tapping into the potential of the market; (2) Sourcing and procurement of goods and materials from within the region; and (3) Setting up and tapping into the manufacturing capacity and production facilities in the region.

16. Regarding the implications of the ongoing tensions in the Middle East, our respondents highlighted 4 main challenges: (1) Higher business costs; (2) Market uncertainty; (3) Reduced market demand; and (4)

Disruption to supply chain. To counter these effects, their top strategies include: (1) Absorbing cost increase to maintain customer relationships; (2) Passing on cost increase to customers; (3) Undertaking cost-cutting measures; and (4) Diversifying markets.

Establishment of International Advisory Panel (IAP)

17. These findings of our Annual Business Survey reinforce an important message — businesses are operating in an increasingly complex and fast-changing environment, and the only certainty is indeed “uncertainty”.
18. As I shared during our 62nd Council Installation Ceremony last year, SCCCI would establish an International Advisory Panel (IAP, in short) to deepen our strategic foresight and expand our international networks. I am delighted that this vision becomes a reality today. We are honoured that our Guest-of-Honour, Minister Chee Hong Tat, will serve as the Patron of IAP. Through IAP, SCCCI seeks to provide our members and Singapore businesses with strategic guidance and distinctive insights on geopolitical, economic and market developments, while fostering new partnerships and cross collaboration

opportunities involving businesses in Singapore, Southeast Asia, China and beyond.

19. The IAP augments our broader efforts to support businesses in their internationalisation journey. The IAP's strategic guidance and global networks will further strengthen the practical support that we offer to our members.
20. Building future-ready enterprises also requires strong trade associations and business ecosystems. As Singapore continues its economic transformation, partnerships between the Government and trade associations will be increasingly important. With a network of 150 trade association members, SCCCI is committed to strengthening their capabilities through our existing and future initiatives.
21. Looking ahead, SCCCI will continue strengthening our role as a trusted platform connecting businesses, government and international partners, helping enterprises to build new capabilities, create sustainable growth and reinforce Singapore's position as a trusted global hub for business.

Conclusion

22. In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to Minister Chee Hong Tat for gracing this year's SMEICC as Guest-of-Honour. I would also like to thank all our sponsors, partners, and government agencies including e2i, IMDA, Cyber Security Agency of Singapore and Enterprise Singapore for their unwavering support, and for collaborating with SCCCI to make this conference possible. To all our guests and participants, I wish everyone a fruitful and enjoyable conference ahead, and great success in your business! Last but not least, my gratitude also goes to the team behind this year's SMEICC — for their effort, hard work and dedication.

23. 虽然全球环境仍存在许多不确定与不稳定性，庆幸的是我们处于相对和平包容的区域，在人工智能革命等时代的大机遇下，以及本着我国多年来积累的商业信誉与经验，我们应当乐观自信地谋取未来机遇！今天，总商会正式成立“国际顾问团”，以进一步接轨国际，为我们的会员提供前瞻性的战略指导和国际市场洞察，并进一步巩固新加坡作为全球商务和贸易枢纽的角色。我鼓励大家多多善用总商会提供的支持和服务，团结一心，放眼四海，共促合作，勇于创新，并且本着华商精神的优良价值观，必定能

克服困难并实现“共启增长新格局”的美好愿景！谢谢大家。
