

**OPENING OF SMEICC CONFERENCE 2025**  
**WELCOME ADDRESS BY**  
**SCCCI PRESIDENT KHO CHOON KENG**  
**3 SEPTEMBER 2025**  
**SUNTEC CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE**

尊敬的外交部长维文医生，  
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，

1. 大家早上好！首先我谨代表新加坡中华总商会，热烈欢迎大家来到一年一度的中小型企业大会，一同集思广益、探索未来大趋势、洞察新技术和商业模式，并拓展宝贵的人脉资源！
2. 本届大会以“共享未来：重塑商业新格局”为主题，在这复杂多变的全球背景下，既切合时机，也意义深远。正如黄循财总理在今年国庆群众大会上所强调的：随着全球化

的规则逐步瓦解，我们正处在一个关键的历史转折点，新加坡不能只静观其变，更必须积极主动去塑造我们的未来。总理特别勉励我国中小企业，务必把握人工智能这一划时代的关键技术，以提升生产力，并为各个经济领域创造全新价值。

3. 众所周知，当前亚细安或东南亚地区蓬勃发展，预计在2030年将跃升为全球第四大经济体；若各成员国能进一步深化合作，必将释放更强大的潜力。为此，今年大会特别安排了一场炉边对话，邀请来自亚细安多国的华商领袖，共同探讨区域合作的新机遇，携手开创互利共赢、共同繁荣的未来。我深信，在接下来的两天里，这场思想盛宴必将为与会者带来应对今日环境与谋划明日发展的务实启发。

接下来，请允许我以英语发言。

Good morning!

4. 2025 marks SG60 and the 28<sup>th</sup> edition of the SMEICC Conference, a trusted and significant platform where businesses and SMEs come together to access fresh insights, acquire new capabilities, acquaint new

connections and accelerate collaborations, while celebrating this important and historical milestone for Singapore.

5. Over the years, the annual SMEICC Conference has grown into Singapore's foremost bilingual business platform, equipping our business community with timely insights on relevant and forward-looking business ideas as well as empowering enterprises to seize opportunities in the new economy.
6. This year, we have decided on the theme "A Shared Future: Business Re-imagined" — a theme that resonates deeply with us. By "shared future", it reflects Singapore's approach for businesses collaborating with the government and like-minded international partners to promote economic and enterprise development. Re-imagining business underscores Singapore's economic priorities to urge businesses to transform, innovate and strengthen their competitiveness to thrive in the new economy.
7. I am excited that this year's SMEICC will feature 90 distinguished local and overseas speakers sharing their insights and experiences over the next two days across 19

conference tracks. I am thus confident that SMEICC will continue to broaden and sharpen our perspectives and foster new connections to lay the foundation for future collaborations, as well as to navigate the rapidly changing new normal.

### **ASEAN: A Region of Boundless Prospects**

8. I am also delighted that ASEAN will take centre stage at this year's opening session. In July, at the IPS-SBF Conference titled "Global-City Singapore SG60 and Beyond", Prime Minister Lawrence Wong highlighted the immense prospects of ASEAN. He shared that in a fragmented world, regional unity and collaboration matters more than ever. ASEAN is set to become the world's fourth largest economy by 2030 with a young and rising middle class. It is a region that is of renewed focus and priority for Singapore. There is limitless potential to strengthen and advance the integration of ASEAN, offering businesses with a substantial single market to make access and operations seamless across the region.

9. Soon after our Guest-of-Honour's keynote address, we have put together a first - of - its - kind fireside chat among

leaders from the Chinese Chamber of Commerce from Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore. Our esteemed panellists will share how businesses in Southeast Asia can adapt to a more complex environment, opportunities for regional collaboration, and strategies that businesses can deploy to navigate and thrive in today's rapidly changing landscape. We look forward to their insights and perspectives.

### **SCCCI's 2025 Annual Business Survey: Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities**

10. Now, I will share with you highlights from this year's SCCCI Annual Business Survey. As per previous years, we aim to offer some useful context and ideas for our enterprises to strategise and plan for their expansion and roadmap.
11. Firstly, the survey results reveal a cautious outlook - 37% of respondents indicated they are neither optimistic nor pessimistic, 33% pessimistic and just 24% optimistic. Encouragingly, 39% of respondents expect revenue growth this year, up from 33% last year — though optimism remains measured. Among the 75% of

respondents who anticipated profits this year, 54% of them indicated they foresee less profits this year compared to last year. Rising business costs remain a key concern for 65% of our respondents, but this is an improvement from 76% last year.

12. Similar to last year, this year's survey revealed that the top three concerns of businesses 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, they continue to face the same key challenges as in last year: (1) Lack of internal expertise and resources to transform; (2) Internal resistance from staff; and (3) Uncertainties about the outcome of transformation.
13. On internationalisation, the momentum is building — 50% of our respondents indicated they have stepped up their efforts to internationalise, up from 44% last year. From this survey, the top 5 markets of interest to businesses are Malaysia, China, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand.
14. When we asked our respondents their reasons for pivoting to Southeast Asia, the 3 key drivers revealed are:

(1) Tapping into the potential of the market; (2) Sourcing and procurement of goods and materials from within the region; and (3) Managing geopolitical risks and improving business resilience.

15. On analysing the key impact of US tariffs, respondents highlighted 3 main challenges: (1) Market uncertainties; (2) Higher business costs; and (3) Having to adjust their supply chain. To counter these effects, their top 3 strategies are: (1) Diversifying markets; (2) Sourcing from alternative suppliers; and (3) Delaying investments.

### **SCCCI's Initiatives Driving Business Growth**

16. At this year's National Day Rally, PM Wong also spoke about building a "We-First" society and the steadfast Singapore Spirit. The SCCCI Chinese Entrepreneurial Spirit is a true reflection of the Singapore Spirit from the business perspective — rooted in patriotism, guided by a deep sense of integrity and contributing back to the society, and uniting businesses to help strengthen the nation's economic development and our enterprises' capabilities. In this regard, I am heartened that SCCCI has been proactive

and dynamic to offer a wide range of initiatives to work with our members and the business community.

17. Throughout the year, we have partnered actively with the government to drive initiatives enabling our members to transform, digitalise, adopt new technologies, develop capabilities in sustainability, and venture into overseas markets.
18. This year, with the support of Enterprise Singapore, we brought Singapore businesses to key regions of China through a series of market workshops, giving them first-hand insights from industry experts and helping them build deeper ties with Chinese enterprises. Through our GlobalConnect@SCCCI initiative, we continue to provide market advisory, business matching, and facilitation services tailored to the China market. And as we look to the Johor-Singapore SEZ, we have also partnered with UOB and Maybank to deliver on-the-ground advisory and financing solutions — so that our members are well-equipped to seize the opportunities ahead.
19. As Singapore moves into the next phase of economic transformation, partnerships between the government and



trade associations will be more critical than ever in driving growth and progress. With a network of 150 trade association members, SCCCI is committed to strengthening your capabilities so you can play a larger role in shaping the future of your industries. Through our TACOM Transformation Centre, we will analyse your needs and offer customised assistance to strengthen your competencies in internationalisation, digitalisation, and sustainability — so that you are empowered to lead industry transformation with confidence.

20. These wide-ranging initiatives are a testament of SCCCI's commitment in serving our members with dedication and creating eternal value for the business community.

## **Conclusion**

21. In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan for gracing the Conference as Guest-of-Honour. I would also like to thank all our sponsors, partners, and government agencies, e2i, IMDA and Enterprise Singapore for their unwavering support, and for collaborating with SCCCI to make this

conference possible. To all our delegates, I wish everyone a fruitful and enjoyable conference ahead, and great success in your business! Last but not least, my heartfelt gratitude to the team behind this year's SMEICC Conference — for their hard work, dedication and untiring effort!

22. 最后，希望大家从本次大会中收获满满，也衷心祝福大家身体健康，事业兴隆！谢谢。

\*\*\*\*\*