

EMBARGOED TILL 11AM
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**SPEECH BY CHAIRPERSON OF PAP WOMEN'S WING AND MINISTER FOR
MANPOWER AND SECOND MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS MRS JOSEPHINE
TEO AT THE LAUNCH OF REIMAGINE FASHION SHOWCASE CELEBRATING
THE POWER AND VERSATILITY OF WOMEN ON 6 MARCH 2021**

1. On Monday, the world will celebrate International Women's Day (IWD). So will Singapore.
2. I must thank Ann, all our Women Member of Parliament and activists for the creative way of marking the occasion, overcoming the physical constraints, and supporting our sustainability movement, all at the same time.
3. I also want to welcome our Sisters from the NTUC, led by President Mary Liew! Our sisters in the Labour Movement have been amazing - in terms of their resilience and unwavering support for the workers of Singapore.
4. Earlier this year, Minister Masagos declared 2021 the Year of Celebrating SG Women.
5. Indeed, women's place in our society have be strengthened over the years.
6. Since the PAP has been in government, the lives of countless women have been uplifted.
 - a. We see them in our families and communities,
 - b. in our educational institutions and many occupations, and among our leaders.
 - c. For example, compared to when we celebrated IWD last year, there are more women in Parliament. The largest representation of women MPs is from the PAP, with a contingent of 24. They are making their mark in different ways.

7. During last week's Budget debate, Comrade Rahayu highlighted how women in Singapore continue to be supported through the Government's fiscal measures.

8. Other PAP women MPs spoke on a spectrum of issues, from the stewardship of our national resources by Comrades Foo Mee Har and Cheryl Chan, to the care of vulnerable groups by Comrades Carrie Tan, Rachel Ong and Nadia Samdin, and the digitalisation of Small Medium Enterprises by Comrades Tin Pei Ling and Mariam Jaafar.

9. Even with all the progress made, we recognise that helping women to succeed is a journey without end.

10. With every shift in the landscape, we must be willing to re-examine how better to support women to realise our full potential, and to be protected from harm.

11. Yesterday, for example, Minister for Law and Home Affairs Shanmugam updated Parliament on plans for the sentencing framework for sexual and hurt offences.

12. It follows a statement Women's Wing (WW) issued in July last year, expressing our serious concerns about the apparent inadequate sentences meted out in several cases.

13. In September, the Government started an important and wide-ranging conversation about the position of women in Singapore.

- a. There have been many thoughtful dialogues, and more are on the way.
- b. The Government is on track to issue a White Paper later this year.

14. As a party, we too will update our engagement with our women supporters and activists.

15. Day-in, day-out, on the ground and within their communities, our women supporters and activists help with the party's outreach and engagement, identify issues of concern for feedback, and advocate for change.

16. They are the party's anchors in the community and our bridge to women from all walks of life.
17. From our interactions with them, we observe two areas of growing interest. They are:
 - a. understanding how other countries approach issues that impact women; and
 - b. providing policy inputs to the Government.
18. This is a natural progression from our ground activism and also reflects the evolving profile of our women activists.
19. Many are professionals in their own right who have the capacity to help WW remain effective champions of women empowerment.
20. To this end, WW will set up two new functions.
 - a. The first is Research.
 - i. This will be headed by Comrade Yeo Wan Ling, with Comrade Gan Siow Huang as Adviser.
 - ii. The Research group will keep a close watch on emerging trends and their impact on women. For example, how can remote working help women juggle their roles as caregivers, and yet not become marginalised when it comes to career progression?
 - iii. We will also sharpen our sensing of women's views. For example, how do they feel about topical concerns like the new sentencing framework or P1 registration rules?
 - b. The second is Policy.
 - i. This will be headed by Comrade Hany Soh, with Comrade Sun Xueling as Adviser.
 - ii. With 24 women in Parliament, WW can give voice to concerns of women through the questions they file, the bills, motions and debates they speak on. They already do so actively. For example,

Comrade Denise Phua asked about Silver Support, and Comrade Cheng Li Hui raised the issue of social egg freezing.

- iii. As an extension of our Research work, we can also advocate for improvements and set out our recommendations through position papers. In fact, since 2012, WW has put out six position papers ranging from Marriage & Parenthood, Seniors in Singapore, and Strengthening Gender Diversity in Corporate Leadership. All of them resulted in change in one way or another.

21. Our vision has been to empower every woman in Singapore to realise her full potential.

22. With the setting up of these two new functions, we welcome more like-minded women to partner with WW to advance the cause of women's development in Singapore.

- a. In keeping with the party's ethos, we have a strong bias for action and we invite fellow citizens who would like to lend us a helping hand.
- b. You can easily find our email contacts online.
- c. You may not be a party member or even agree with the PAP on every issue.
- d. But as long as you have a keen interest to continue empowering women the same way the PAP has over many decades, we have something in common.

23. Sisters, there are many ways to mark the Year of Celebrating SG Women.

- a. Besides today's events for IWD, the PAP Women's Wing plans again to pay tribute to mothers in May
- b. and to hold our signature annual conference in September.

24. But perhaps the best way to honour women is to ensure we all emerge stronger from the Covid-19 crisis, more assured of our place in Singapore and more equipped to scale new heights.

25. Then, it will really be a year worth celebrating!

26. Happy Women's Day!