**Opening Address by Ms Sim Ann, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Communications and Information, at the Singapore International Cyber Week 2020 - Women in Cyber Event, on 7 Oct 2020**

**"Digital and Cybersecurity Opportunities for All "**

Ladies and gentlemen,

**Introduction**

1.      Greetings to everyone! Whatever time zone you might be in, let me warmly welcome you to our first virtual Singapore International Cyber Week, or SICW for short.

2.      I am delighted to say that women have enjoyed a prominent place on the agenda at SICW. Over the past month, a series of events were co-organised between the Cyber Security Agency of Singapore (or CSA) and community partners in Singapore to celebrate and promote women in cybersecurity as part of the SG Cyber Women X Series. These included webinars on cybersecurity, career talks, and even a virtual Capture-The-Flag competition. I hear that many enjoyed the events and told us they will continue to support our efforts in promoting Women in Cyber.

3.      Today's Women in Cyber event concludes the series with all of you, our international friends. Held in conjunction with SICW, today's event is co-organised by the High Commission of Canada, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and CSA.

4.      It is fitting that we come together across countries, to learn from one another and exchange ideas on how to capitalise on digital and cybersecurity opportunities for everyone. The digital world is borderless, after all.

**COVID-19 and the new normal**

5.      COVID-19 has forced us all to adapt to a "new normal" in a very short time. I remember vividly delivering the keynote address at the inaugural Women in Cyber event just last year, to a large room full of women, and men who support women. None of us in that room could have predicted that this year's event would look like this.

6.      Still, I am sure that many of you can see silver linings in the situation. For example, this virtual format allows us to reach participants who may not have been able

to attend in-person. We are leveraging digitalisation to connect - whether across town or across continents.

7. We used to think of digitalisation as the pathway to greater convenience and better service quality. This remains true, but in a pandemic digitalisation means business continuity, and business continuity means survival.

8. I am proud that our businesses and workers have demonstrated incredible adaptability and resilience. Like many around the world, our citizens stepped up to the challenge and quickly adapted to new digital ways to live, work and play.

**Imperative of Digital Inclusion**

9. At the same time, accelerated and increased reliance on digitalisation is not without risk. Cyber threats are growing in scale and sophistication worldwide. A recent study by CrowdStrike regarding threat activity on their customer networks showed more intrusion attempts in the first six months of this year than in all of 2019 combined!

10. Cyber criminals are determined and opportunistic. They will target the vulnerable amongst us - whether they are big organisations, small businesses or individuals like you and me.

11. We must be equipped to tackle these threats. Making this digital leap can be daunting. That is why Singapore launched the SG Digital Office earlier this year. The Office strives to equip every individual and business with digital tools and skills to participate meaningfully in this "new normal". In particular, the office supports seniors and microenterprises, like owners of small food stalls, in taking the first step on their digitalisation journey safely and securely. CSA also continues to work with the Ministry of Education to conduct outreach through schools. These aim to cultivate good cyber hygiene practices among our youth.

12. That is what digital inclusion really is about - not just technological accessibility, but ensuring that everyone has the confidence, skills and knowledge to navigate the digital domain safely and securely.

**Cybersecurity Opportunities for All**

13. There is one more silver lining to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite global economic contraction and unemployment, the tech industry and global cybersecurity market are expected to grow. These present good career opportunities. Cybersecurity

roles offer meaningful work, good career progression and lend themselves to flexible working arrangements. These are particularly beneficial for workers who need to juggle family and work obligations.

14.     Despite these good prospects, many perceive cybersecurity or other tech-related jobs as inaccessible. For example, it is generally acknowledged that there is global under-representation of women in tech. This is something we should work to overcome. Already, many capable women are trailblazers in the industry. Just last month, Singapore published a list of 100 women who made outstanding contributions in tech. Our panellists today are also among the many capable individuals who have excelled in their fields. What we want is to see many more women having the opportunity to follow these trailblazers in pursuing meaningful, fulfilling careers in tech. And this includes cybersecurity too.

**Supporting our Workforce and Growing the Pipeline**

15.     Singapore has ramped up our efforts to support our workforce to take advantage of the many opportunities available. For example, the SG United Jobs and Skills Package provides access to placement and training opportunities, even in the current bleak economic climate. To grow the pool of professionals who can capitalise on opportunities in the cyber industry, CSA launched the SG Cyber Talent initiative earlier this year. This aims to reach out to at least 20,000 individuals over three years to encourage them to embark on and advance their journey in cybersecurity.

16.     At last year's Women in Cyber event, several students participated and spoke about their experience. They, and others, cited teachers as major influences on their career pathways. To acknowledge their importance, CSA will be introducing an SG Cyber Educators programme to engage with and grow the pool of passionate educators knowledgeable about the cybersecurity industry. We hope that these educators can inspire their students to consider a cybersecurity career. Even better, perhaps this passion could inspire their parents who may be considering a mid-career switch too!

17.     These educators could also help to foster stronger collaboration between academia and industry. Ultimately, we hope that this initiative will help to mould more passionate cybersecurity graduates with good grounding and industry-ready skillsets ready to capitalise on the many opportunities in the industry. More details on the initiative will be shared at the inaugural virtual Singapore Cybersecurity Education Symposium next month.

**Conclusion**

18.     The past few months have been tough for many, and we will feel the effects of the pandemic for a while longer. Nonetheless, I am heartened to see the many initiatives and community efforts around the world in promoting digital and cybersecurity opportunities for all. This will allow us to harness the opportunities that have emerged from this "new normal" and help us bounce back from this crisis stronger.

19.     I wish you all a fruitful session ahead. Thank you.