

TRANSCRIPT OF CLOSING REMARKS BY MS RAHAYU MAHZAM, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION AND CO-CHAIR OF SUNLIGHT AFA AT THE “TOGETHER FOR A BETTER INTERNET: PROTECTING WOMEN & GIRLS FROM ONLINE HARMS” ON TUESDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2022

Good evening. I would first like to thank the panellists for your time, and all the useful nuggets of information and tips you shared earlier. I was listening in as a parent as well, and I thought that they were very useful tips. I'm very excited because in conjunction with Safer Internet Day, the Sunlight AfA is also organising a webinar for the first time. I think that it is apt that we are discussing this topic on this day.

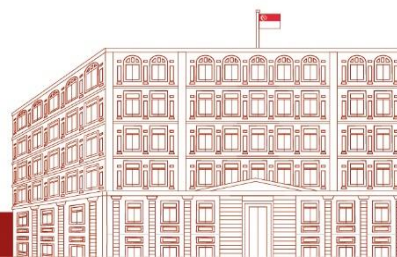
2. I heard and saw earlier some of the questions, as well as the comments made by the panellists. There really is great interest on the issues surrounding the content that our children are being exposed to online – the technology-facilitated harassment that they may face. These are so real for children. As parents, we want to do our best and want to protect them from so many things. It is already enough to deal with in the physical world, and we now have to also worry about what is happening on the online space. These are things that we have to actually think about and face. Our children are mostly digital natives – and especially with COVID-19 and the push to using technology especially in schools, you will see a lot of these issues becoming very real. Some of these issues have real life negative impact on our youth and it transcends many different dimensions – mental, physical or social issues. These are things that we wanted to speak about today, and so we have targeted parents, to bring you to this platform to have this discussion.

3. I am heartened by the encouragement and support that the panellists have given earlier. I think that is what we need now. We have a lot of concerns surrounding the issues on the online space – these are not going to go away. And I think the solution is not to run away from the digital space because that is here to stay. There are benefits – for example how the Internet has helped in connecting us, in breaking boundaries globally, and allowing for greater opportunities. And so, we need to learn to empower our children to strengthen our skills and make ourselves resilient to this. The reality is that these issues that we are talking about and the concerns that we have – we are not alone in this, not just as a country, but globally.

4. I recently attended the International Grand Committee on Disinformation and the topic was on online harms. There was a lot of discussion and international views on issues such as platform regulation, safety by design, ways to empower parents, as well as developing more campaigns and creating better public education so that people are more edified and better equipped to deal with the developments in the digital space. These are issues that we will also have to look at here in Singapore. These platforms and opportunities that we have and also things that we are hoping to do in the future; bringing together community where people including parents are supported. You are not alone in this. You are in an ecosystem where we all want to do our best for children.

5. Sharing some of these practical ideas and then having deep conversations allow for us to create not just a space where we are protecting them, but also teaching them how to regulate behaviour. We can all learn together, and hopefully this will help us strengthen this ability to build a better community.

6. I think the approach we will have to take is a multi-pronged one. We all have to play a part in appreciating and understanding our children better, learning from experts, knowing how to deal with our teenagers and young children, and embracing that new technology that they are facing. We can then also leverage different partnerships and collaborations with platforms. We also may need to look at what are some of the basic safety regulations that we can put in place. We may



need to update some of our laws. There is really an international convergence on how we can regulate internet better with some statutes or some laws in place.

7. These are all the things that is a package that we will need to look at and come together on. Hopefully, we can co-create a better internet together with insights from parents, tech companies – everybody doing our part to make sure that the internet is as safe place as it can be.

8. We liken it to how it is like in Singapore – we can walk on the streets, generally being comfortable and not having to worry about crime happening. I think we want that kind of safety and comfort and assurance for children online. But this takes effort. We are still in the nascent stages, but we can all play that role to strengthen the digital safety for all of our children. I hope this is a start.

9. I thank you for your time for your interest in this. I hope we can continue journeying with Sunlight AfA. We will take your feedback and hopefully co-create more initiatives and bring in more ideas so that we can see and achieve the vision that we want for children. Thank you.

