

**REMARKS BY
MR KEITH TAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, SINGAPORE TOURISM BOARD AT THE
TOURISM RECOVERY DIALOGUE, 22 JULY 2020**

1. Hi everyone, thank you for joining us today.
2. And thank you Minister Chan for your honest, bracing but also encouraging remarks for all of us here.
3. I also want to thank the members of the Tourism Recovery Action Task Force (TRAC) who are here with us. They have helped us to get a good handle on the challenges faced by our businesses, as well as in helping us to co-create and implement some of the strategies that we need for this difficult time.
4. I also want to have a special word of thanks to all of you who have stepped up to support our national efforts against COVID-19. For example, many of our tourist guides became Safe Distancing Ambassadors during this time, while others like Genting Cruise Lines, SATS-Creuers, Resorts World Sentosa, SingEx and many hotels, had provided accommodation and other facilities to support the fight against COVID-19. Thank you so much.
5. At this point, we know that our sector is facing an existential crisis and many of you must be wondering what the coming months will bring. That is crystal ball gazing.
6. But what I hope to do, in the next five minutes, is to lay out three key directions that STB wants to take with you, over the next year, to give you your best chance of emerging stronger through this crisis.

SUSTAIN

7. First, let's start by talking about sustaining our businesses. Our top priorities are to support good companies, redesign jobs and strengthen key capabilities, as Minister Chan has reminded us.
8. Earlier, he spoke about the support measures that our Government has already provided. And these have been a crucial form of "life support" for many of you over the past months. In addition, STB has also expanded the scope of our grant schemes to support good ideas and proposals from you.

9. But given the severe impact that COVID-19 has had on international travel, it is inevitable that more job losses will happen in the coming months. Some of the support measures that Minister spoke of earlier will eventually taper off. I assure you that STB will continue to support you in other ways.
10. We have been working very closely with Workforce Singapore (WSG) and SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) to support tourism businesses and workers in leveraging the SGUnited Jobs and Skills Package to create jobs, to help you expeditiously redeploy workers where there are excess workers, and to provide traineeships and training opportunities. We will step up these efforts together with you.
11. Many of you have used these support schemes to retrain, redesign and upskill your workers. For example, hotels like PARKROYAL on Kitchener Road, and Novotel and Mercure Singapore on Stevens have tapped on these programmes to roll out customised Job Redesign Plans to broaden their employees' skill sets and enable them to take up different roles beyond their current scope of work.
12. We will also work with you to identify key capabilities in the different tourism sectors that we must maintain – this is necessary in order to ensure that our sectors remain competitive and can emerge strongly when international travel resumes.

RECOVER

13. The next thrust is recover.
14. Realistically, as Minister Chan reminds us, mass leisure travel will not return substantially anytime soon. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) expects air travel recovery to lag behind most of the economy for the next 5 years. How will our tourism businesses recover? This is why we need to look at how to tap into domestic demand.
15. The challenge is whether we can re-direct some of the \$34 billion Singaporeans spent on overseas travel in 2018 that Minister Chan spoke about, towards our local tourism and lifestyle businesses.
16. We know this is not going to be easy. Many Singaporeans are worried about retaining their jobs. Others are facing pay cuts. And it's not uncommon to hear Singaporeans say that there's nothing to do here, or that they've seen and done all that Singapore has to offer.

17. Nevertheless, we believe that Singaporeans are adventurous and more importantly, they love Singapore and what we have here. And of course, we believe that Singapore is far from boring – and in fact, there is so much more to learn, discover and love.

18. This is where our domestic campaign **SingapoRediscover**s comes in.

19. Through SingapoRediscover, which we will drive together with Enterprise Singapore and the Sentosa Development Corporation, we will encourage locals to discover different sides of Singapore through unique insider experiences and great packages, and to lend their support to local businesses.

TRANSFORM

20. Lastly, we will need to transform and reimagine our businesses. COVID-19 has been a fundamental discontinuity for the tourism sector. Please do not expect things to go back to “business as usual” after international travel resumes.

21. In June, STB put out an industry paper entitled “Thriving in the New Normal Through Technology and Transformation”, where we laid out five imperatives:

- Creating more contactless experiences
- Providing new ways for customers to experience your products and offerings
- Real-time monitoring and management of crowds and queues
- Redesigning your workplaces for the safety of your staff and crew
- Maintaining highest standards of hygiene and cleaning through new solutions

22. We also issued an **Open Call for Solutions**, and have so far received **close to 200** applications from solution providers. We will showcase some of these solutions at a digital marketplace next week, and I strongly encourage you to sign up and find out how these tech providers can help you transform your business.

23. To complement this open call, we will open the **ThreeHouse at STB in 2021**. This is a co-innovation space for industry stakeholders and tech providers to collaborate, workshop and test new ideas and solutions, and to support companies in coming up with a minimal viable product that can be quickly tested in the marketplace.

24. I want to go back to the point I made earlier about reimagining new ways for customers to experience your offerings and products.

25. For example, Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS) digitalised interactions with their animals through their “Hello from the Wild Side” initiative. This innovation garnered great interest from the public during the circuit breaker period and WRS plans to continue this activity as part of their “new” normal.
26. Another example is this year's **Singapore Food Festival**, which will go virtual for the first time in its 27-year history. Organisers will bring the festival into the homes of attendees with masterclasses by our local culinary talents and curated offerings delivered to their doorsteps. In this way, locals can continue to support our F&B industry, and our culinary talents would be visible to a global audience.
27. Earlier this morning, we also announced a framework towards the safe resumption of business events. This is a curtain-raiser – and we are working with the Singapore Association of Convention & Exhibition Organisers & Suppliers (SACEOS) – that reimagines what **Safe Business Events** could look like in the new normal, and how you, if you are an event organiser, can meet all the standards and reimagine your business and your events. Our aspiration is for Singapore to become the world's safest, most trusted and most innovative destination for quality business events.
28. Not all the transformation needs to be technological or digital. For example, if your product has been largely skewed towards an international market, you may need to reimagine it so that it can appeal to a local audience too, and then tap into the SingapoRediscovered campaign.
29. Let me wrap up. Singapore is well poised to emerge from this crisis.
- According to Euromonitor, we are the 5th most visited city in the world in terms of international visitors, ahead of New York, Paris and Tokyo
 - Our attractions, hotels and leisure offerings are highly regarded around the world. Many have won international accolades, such as the 2020 Star Awards by Forbes Travel Guide, the World's 50 Best Bars and Restaurants, as well as the World Luxury Hotel awards
 - The International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) has just named Singapore the “Top Meeting City in the Asia-Pacific” – a spot we have held for 18 consecutive years
 - For Cruise, Singapore was the top city port in Asia in 2019, according to the Cruise Line International Association, and Marina Bay Cruise Centre was ranked the best cruise port in 2019 by Travel Weekly Readers' Choice
30. STB's **Brand Health Survey** shows that overall sentiments remain positive towards Singapore and we continue to be seen as either the number one or two

most favourable city destination for leisure and business travel even at this time, compared to other major city destinations in the region.

31. All these positions Singapore well for recovery when the demand for international travel returns.

32. Admittedly, that may seem very far away. But we are already working on **market-specific plans for international recovery** and will activate these plans when we sense the earliest glimmers of recovery. When that happens, we will reach out to you again.

33. Thank you.