

**SPEECH FOR MR MASAGOS ZULKIFLI,  
MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT,  
AT NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE (NCSS) SOCIAL SERVICE SUMMIT,  
2 JULY 2025**

Ms Anita Fam,  
President of NCSS,

Dr Aawatif Hayar,  
Former Minister Of Solidarity,  
Social Integration and Family, from Morocco,  
Scientific Advisor of Smart City Expo, Casablanca,  
General Co-Chair of IEEE [*pronounced 'eye-triple-E'*]  
International Smart Cities Conference

NCSS Board Members,  
Distinguished Foreign Delegates,  
Partners From The Private, Public And  
Social Service Sector,

Ladies And Gentlemen,

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. Good morning.  
Every Social Service Summit,  
I'm always inspired to witness  
practitioners,  
leaders,  
and academics  
coming together  
to collaborate and innovate  
towards a better social service sector.

2. But this year's Summit is especially significant, for two reasons.

- a. First,  
this Summit is held  
in the 60th year  
of independence – or what we call SG60.  
And therefore it's a time we can also reflect on our journey.  
It is fitting to celebrate  
the pioneers in our sector  
who established the foundations  
in our early years of nationhood,  
and the generations of leaders after them who painstakingly built up  
our social service ecosystem.

- b. Second,  
this is the first Summit  
attended by foreign delegates,  
from 11 countries!

We look forward  
To learning from  
your experience and perspectives.  
And let's welcome them to our Summit.

- 3. Ladies and gentlemen, this Summit  
is actually one of three conferences  
that the Ministry of Social and Family Development  
hopes to organise and lead  
with like-minded  
stakeholders, academics, and leaders  
from all over the world.  
We hope that these conferences  
will serve as platforms  
for the exchange and development  
of original ideas  
in the social sector.

- a. The first conference is the  
**Asian Family Conference**,  
because families are the bedrock of our society, and therefore  
this conference focuses on  
strengthening our families  
in Asia and beyond.

Strong families mean a strong society.

- b. The second is the **International Conference on Societies of Opportunity**, because beyond our families, there is a need for us to create access to opportunities for the members of society, particularly groups who may be disadvantaged. This ensures that within our societies, social mobility can be achieved.

- c. And the third is this -  
**NCSS Social Service Summit,**  
for which we are all here today.  
As a sector,  
we have come together  
to collaborate and innovate,  
in order to better meet  
the needs of  
our people and our society.

#### **KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- 4. The theme of this year's Summit is  
"Transforming the Future of Social Service through Talent and Technology".

5. It is indeed opportune for us to consider our sector's future, amidst the changing local, global, and technological landscape.
  - a. Around the world, demographic, societal, and global trends spell a greater need for social services.
    - i. At home, we face an ageing society and rising demand for health and social workers. Mental health is also a growing concern, especially amongst the youth.
    - ii. Globally, we witness rising trade barriers, increasing geopolitical tensions, and conflicts around the world. Growing costs and employment uncertainties may become a reality. Many countries also face rising inequality, as we discussed three months ago at the inaugural

International Conference on  
Societies of Opportunity,  
that some of you attended.

- b. And yet,  
our changing world  
presents new possibilities,  
especially in the realm of  
technological advancements and Artificial Intelligence, or AI.
  - i. The development of  
technology and AI is rapid,  
and has an undeniable impact  
on our social service sector.
  - ii. Let me begin by unpacking  
what the advancement of technology might mean for us.

## **IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON SOCIAL WORK AND THE SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR**

- 6. As social service practitioners,  
I believe we must be mindful  
of the impact of technology  
in at least two key areas.
  - a. First,  
we must be mindful of its impact  
on society.

- i. With increased access to technology,  
we can connect with family,  
friends,  
and even strangers  
at the touch of a button.  
Yet,  
this same ease of access  
could lead to an increase  
in social isolation.
  
- ii. With the digital convenience of  
delivery apps,  
online meeting platforms,  
and digital entertainment,  
an individual can actually live  
without any physical social interaction.
  
- iii. While technology has given us access  
to media content,  
social media has an impact  
especially on the mental health of many of us, particularly our  
young.

It can be easy to compare  
ourselves,  
our circumstances,  
and our lives  
with curated content online.  
Some studies have tracked an increase

in rates of depression and anxiety  
due to social media usage.

- iv. The rise of technology  
may also leave some behind.  
We have already seen some  
displaced from their jobs by AI.

Older adults

and those not proficient with tech skills may struggle to function  
in a society  
which assumes digital fluency.

- v. These are just some of  
the very real issues  
that face our society and our clients.  
As part of the social service sector,  
we must become familiar with them.

- b. Second,  
we must be aware  
of how technology and AI  
impacts our sector specifically.

- i. Connectedness through technology  
sparks greater opportunity  
for sharing data,  
information,  
and research findings.  
This can mean  
more seamless coordination  
of services for our clients,  
and stronger interventions  
as we better collaborate  
with one another.

- ii. However,

we must be  
extra vigilant of data security.  
We have seen how poor cybersecurity  
can lead to data leaks and misuse.

- iii. There is also greater reach  
in our service delivery as  
AI chatbots,  
virtual assistants,  
and remote services  
such as online counselling  
become more prevalent.

- iv. I read a particular book by Dr Li Fei-Fei,  
Titled *The Worlds I See*.  
She says, and I quote:  
“Still,  
even the flashiest hardware  
is a means to an end,  
which is why  
the guiding principle of our work remains the well-being of people,  
not merely the efficiency of processes.”
- v. This perfectly encapsulates  
the attitude with which we must approach technology and AI in our  
field.  
Ultimately,  
we are a sector built on heart and soul.  
Our use of data,  
technology and AI  
can allow us to provide more personalised and targeted care.  
But,  
the human touch and empathy  
with which we deliver our services  
can and must be evident  
even as we  
leverage technology for service delivery.

## **THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE SECTOR**

7. So what is the way forward for us as a sector?



8. I believe there are  
three key moves we must make,  
to remain dynamic,  
forward-looking  
and future-ready.
  - a. First,  
we must leverage technology  
for greater impact.
  - b. Second,  
we must continue  
to develop social service agencies, or SSAs, that are strong and capable;  
and

- c. Third,  
we must uplift professionals  
within the sector. Let me elaborate.

***Leveraging Technology For Greater Impact***

- 9. First,  
we will help agencies and professionals  
leverage technology for greater impact,  
as the volume and complexity  
of our work increases.
  - a. NCSS President Anita mentioned  
the strategies  
that NCSS is adopting  
to enhance digitalisation.

Allow me to  
take a macro lens  
and share our overarching vision  
for digital transformation in the sector.

10. We envision a social service sector  
enabled by technology,  
one that is  
**Innovative,**  
**Data-powered,**  
**Efficient,**  
**Accessible,**  
**and Linked –**  
**or IDEAL for short.**  
Let me elaborate.

- a. First,  
an Innovative sector  
is one that proactively leverages  
emerging technologies  
that impact social services.
  
- b. Second,  
a Data-powered sector  
is empowered  
to make better decisions  
based on evidence,  
to maximise the impact of our work.

c. Third,  
services can be made  
more Efficient but also Accessible  
by leveraging AI,  
automation,  
and digital experiences where appropriate;

d. Lastly,  
digitalisation can help us  
Link our eco-system,  
through providing common platforms  
to coordinate services  
and share data effectively.  
This complements our broader effort  
to encourage  
strategic partnerships and collaborations across the sector.

11. To realise this vision  
for digital transformation,  
we will start by  
ensuring our systems are well-integrated  
and support service delivery.

a. Over the years,  
those in Singapore would know we have rolled out systems such as  
SSNet,  
OneCV and CaseConnect,  
to improve  
the integration of social services.

- b. Building on these efforts, MSF will be rolling out a new system named **CaseCentral**, to replace SSNet progressively.
  - c. Leveraging new technologies such as AI, CaseCentral will transform case management through streamlined processes, automated workflows and providing holistic insights on clients and their families.
  - d. This will enable MSF and SSAs to deliver integrated and timely support for our clients.
12. To complement our systems, we will also implement digital tools that support the sector.
- a. One example, as Anita has mentioned, is **Scribe**, an AI-powered tool that transcribes and summarises conversations in multiple languages, including English, Mandarin, Malay,

,  
and even Singlish,  
into case notes.

- b. This was developed  
by Open Government Products (OGP),  
and made available to  
eligible SSAs  
since January this year.

- 13. With these new systems and tools,  
we can leverage technology  
to enhance our sector's reach,  
deepen our impact,  
and better serve those in need.

### ***Strengthening The Capabilities Of SSAs***

- 14. Our second move  
is to strengthen SSAs.  
We are deeply invested  
in doing so,  
and have already come some way.
  - a. For example,  
in 2022,  
NCSS launched the  
**Organisational Health Framework  
for Social Services.**  
This comprehensive tool

allows SSAs to assess themselves  
across multiple domains  
and identify areas of growth and improvement.

- b. As of mid-last month,  
46 SSAs that embarked on  
capability-building projects,  
with support from the  
**Community Capability Trust**,  
saw improvements in their scores  
under the Framework.

This reflects that they have become  
better equipped  
to provide effective services.

- 15. We will do more.  
This SG60 year,  
we want to recognise and amplify  
the tremendous impact  
that SSAs make  
in shaping lives and communities.  
To honour their impact  
and empower their future,  
I am heartened  
that the sector can now benefit from the  
\$7.5 million dollar **SG60 Towards Sustainability Fund**.

- a. The Fund will provide a special one-off grant of \$30,000 to eligible SSAs, to encourage them to build robust capabilities for measuring the impact of their programmes in a systematic and meaningful way.
  - b. With enhanced evaluation capabilities, SSAs will be better equipped to assess the effectiveness of their initiatives, refine their services, and deliver stronger support for their clients.
  - c. They will also be in a better position to attract sustained funding from donors, which ensures that their impactful programmes continue to thrive.
16. With these efforts, it is both timely and critical to strengthen NCSS's role from membership body to sector developer, as NCSS President Anita mentioned.

17. And therefore, NCSS will journey alongside SSAs and continue to offer relevant resources where applicable, to complement the **SG60 Towards Sustainability Fund.**

18. Ladies and gentlemen, SSAs are the cornerstone of our social service landscape. We remain committed to recognising their contributions, amplifying their impact, and strengthening their capabilities.

### ***Uplifting Professionals***

19. Now,  
allow me to turn  
to another important group –  
the social service professionals themselves.
- a. Our professionals are at the heart  
of the social service sector.  
Today,  
we have more than 20,000  
in a wide range of job roles –  
from social workers, psychologists,  
occupational and speech therapists,  
to youth workers and professionals  
in corporate functions,  
just to name a few.
- b. Their commitment,  
expertise,  
and service  
are an immense contribution  
to our society.
20. This is precisely why MSF designated  
this SG60 year as  
the **Year of Celebrating Social Service Professionals**.
- a. As we reflect on our journey

and envision the path ahead,  
it is vital to honour the contributions  
of social service professionals,

because they have been instrumental  
in shaping Singapore into  
a more compassionate and caring nation.

- b. This year,  
we have publicised  
the meaningful work of  
social service professionals  
on various channels,  
to raise awareness  
of the different roles  
in the sector  
and inspire greater appreciation  
for their many contributions.

- c. We also launched the **Social Services Heritage Trail**, in partnership with the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS), to tell the story of our sector and its professionals.

Through a journey across key historical sites, the Trail showcases how communities and individuals stepped forward to support those in need.

d. Later this evening,  
the inaugural  
**Social Service Professional Awards**  
will also be presented.  
This will acknowledge the excellent work  
of diverse professionals  
across career fields ranging from  
social work  
to therapy  
to even corporate services.

21. On top of recognising professionals,  
we are committed  
to supporting them  
in the important work they do.

- a. To retain our dedicated professionals,  
the sector must also offer salaries  
that reflect their hard work and skillsets.
  
- b. That's why  
we regularly review the salary ranges  
in our **Skills and Salary Guidelines**,  
and engage employers  
to strengthen adherence to them,  
to ensure that  
the sector is competitive  
and talented people want to join us.
  
- c. Today,  
about 80% of employees  
in the social service sector  
are paid according to these guidelines.
  
- d. We will continue to  
uplift our social service professionals  
at each stage of their careers,  
from offering avenues and grants  
for professional development and upskilling,  
to working with SSAs  
to create supportive and empowering work environments.

## CONCLUSION

22. Allow me to conclude  
by quoting a well-known saying:  
“Alone we can do so little;  
together we can do so much.”
  - a. It is in coming together  
that we have the confidence  
to face the challenges  
and harness the opportunities  
of the future.
  
23. At this juncture,  
I would like to thank  
all our partners  
for journeying with us over the years.
  - a. In particular,  
I want to celebrate  
our social service professionals.

- b. You have worked tirelessly  
to serve the community,  
with passion  
and commitment.
  - c. Thank you for making our society  
more caring and inclusive.
24. May our time together at the Summit  
allow us to foster stronger collaborations,  
learn from each other,  
and develop new capabilities  
that will strengthen our sector.
25. I wish you all a fruitful time  
at the Summit. Thank you.

\*\*\* \*\*