

Interventions by Minister for Communications and Information Josephine Teo at the G20 Digital Economy Ministers' Meeting 19 August 2023, Bengaluru, India

Priority Issue 1: Digital Public Infrastructure

Distinguished Chair

Excellencies

- 1 Good morning. Many thanks to the Indian Presidency for hosting the G20 Digital Ministers' Meeting, and for inviting Singapore to participate in these timely and relevant discussions. I join colleagues and friends here in Bengaluru in also expressing our appreciation to the Indian Chair for the excellent leadership of the G20 Digital Economy discussions throughout the year.
- 2 The first priority area of "Digital Public Infrastructure" (DPI) is a key concern of all countries, whether developed or still developing. DPI plays a foundational role in the growth of our domestic digital economies, and provides the international connectivity that drives growth and innovation at the regional and global levels. At the same time, our approaches to DPI must vary according to our individual circumstances and priorities. For example, Singapore must plan our digital infrastructure plans to cater to our small, dense, urban environment.
- 3 Singapore adopts a future-oriented and holistic approach towards digital infrastructure development. This means investing ahead of trends, shaping future demand and planning for the components of the digital infrastructure stack in an integrated manner. Our view of the stack goes beyond 'hard' infrastructure such as telecommunications networks or Data Centres. Our stack also consists of an integration of **physical digital infrastructure** such as devices, networks, and middleware. Our stack is therefore designed to enable greater interaction between infrastructure components in the physical world, and **soft infrastructure** or what is known as the "Singapore Digital Utility Stack". These are foundational software for

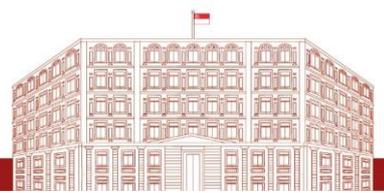




key digital transactions to be conducted seamlessly and securely, such as identity and document verification.

- 4 We want our enterprises and people to benefit from emerging trends such as Artificial Intelligence, immersive virtual experiences, and autonomous systems. To prepare for such developments, Singapore recently launched our Digital Connectivity Blueprint in June. The Blueprint sets out how the Government will work with our partners to enhance Singapore's digital infrastructure, including subsea cables and green data centres.
- 5 The plans committed to in the Blueprint will provide a strong foundation for people and enterprises in Singapore, including the international and regional companies based in Singapore, to enjoy better opportunities.
- 6 We also want to pay attention to the promotion of inter-operability in all our digital infrastructure. Singapore sees value in prioritising the discussion on DPI and we commend the Indian Presidency for highlighting it.
- 7 Thank you.

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Priority Issue 2: Security in the Digital Economy

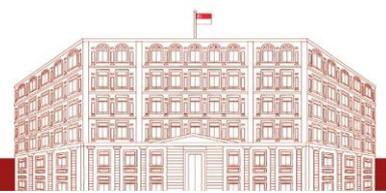
- 1 Thank you, Your Excellency.

- 2 Like the Indian Presidency, Singapore is strongly committed to ensuring the security, safety, and resilience of the digital domain. Our view is that digital security and trust is a key enabler of the digital future. This is why Singapore has implemented regulatory and legislative measures to better protect our people. Please allow me to share some key initiatives:
 - (a) First, the Online Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act (OSMAA) which came into effect in February this year. The Act empowers the government to issue directions to disable access by Singapore users to egregious content found on Online Communication Services such as Social Media Services (SMS). We also issued a Code of Practice for Online Safety in July. This requires designated SMSs to put in place systems and processes to mitigate the risks of danger to Singapore users from exposure to harmful content, including suicide and self-harm content, terrorism content and child sexual abuse material.

 - (b) Second, Singapore also passed the Online Criminal Harms Act (OCHA) this year. This introduces more levers to enable the police and other law enforcement agencies to tackle online activities that are **criminal** in nature. We can now proactively disrupt suspected scams and malicious cyber activities before they harm victims.

 - (c) Third, we are updating our Cybersecurity Act that was enacted in 2018. Our focus back then was to secure our Critical Information Infrastructure (CII). But beyond our CII, today's technological landscape and our operating context means that other digital systems need to be better secured. We are looking to move the Bill in Parliament by the end of 2023.

- 3 Given the transboundary and quickly evolving nature of digital and cyber threats, national efforts can only go so far. Threats such as ransomware attacks by criminal



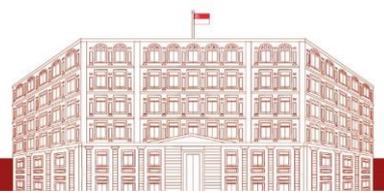


gangs have the potential to disrupt economic activity and the delivery of services through cross-boundary critical information infrastructures such as banking and finance, aviation, maritime and communications at both the regional and global levels. Singapore is currently chairing the 2nd Open-Ended Working Group of ICTs Security at the UN, which is focused on rules, norms and principles that can advance the establishment of a peaceful, secure, stable, resilient and interoperable cyberspace that can also serve as an enabler of global economic progress.

4 In this regard, Singapore commends the G20 Indian Presidency for working with G20 Members to develop the High-Level Principles (HLP) for a safe, secure, interoperable, and resilient cyberspace and a toolkit for cyber awareness and cyber education for children and youth. We look forward to more of such concrete steps, to build a safer and more secure digital economy.

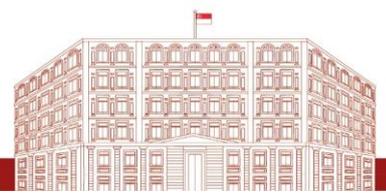
5 Thank you.

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Priority Issue 3: Digital Skilling

- 1 Thank you, Chair.
- 2 The fast pace of development in a digital society, while necessary, can be daunting for many people.
- 3 To ensure that no one is excluded from digital participation due to financial or literacy constraints, the Singapore Government has a suite of targeted initiatives to bridge the digital divide. For example, to ensure digital access for all, we subsidise devices and Internet connectivity for vulnerable groups.
- 4 In the **community**, we established the Singapore Digital Office (SDO) and deployed Digital Ambassadors in the community to help equip groups such as seniors and hawkers, with skills to go online safely and benefit from digital services.
- 5 Recognising the importance of partnerships, we launched the Digital for Life (DfL) Movement, to bring together the public, private and people sectors and galvanise the community to help citizens of all ages and walks of life embrace digital learning as a lifelong pursuit.
- 6 To support our people in their **livelihoods**, the economy and to **nurture a pipeline of tech talent**, we work closely with industry partners to reskill and upskill our tech workforce, especially in areas like AI and cybersecurity. Our TechSkills Accelerator (TeSA) programmes aim to build and develop a skilled tech workforce for Singapore's digital economy. The programmes support ICT and non-ICT professionals to upgrade and acquire new digital skills that are in demand.
- 7 For **businesses**, we have the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Go Digital programme that simplifies and expedites the digitalisation process for SMEs. This includes foundational, easy to deploy solutions under the Start Digital initiative. We also support adoption of Advanced Digital Solutions (ADS) to help deepen enterprise capabilities.





8 We thank the G20 Indian Presidency and our esteemed Chair, Minister Vaishnav, for allowing Singapore to share our experiences and to learn from others in this G20 Digital Economy track. Together, we can ensure that all our people reap the benefits of the digital economy in a way that is safe and future ready. As we approach the end of this Session, may I also add my warmest congratulations to the Indian Presidency on the very successful Digital Economy Ministers' Meeting. Singapore also looks forward to the Brazil presidency next year and wish them every success.

9 Thank you.

