

**SPEECH BY DR JUNE GOH, PRESIDENT, SCWO**  
AT THE  
**SCWO INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY GALA DINNER &  
6th SWHF INDUCTION CEREMONY**  
**ON SATURDAY 23 MARCH 2019, 7PM, ST REGIS HOTEL**

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Our Guest of Honour, Patron of SCWO, President Halimah Yacob,  
Mrs Josephine Teo, Minister for Manpower and Second Minister for Home Affairs,  
Dr Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State,  
Ms Sim Ann, Senior Minister of State Ministry of Culture, Communications and Youth,  
Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim,  
Parliamentarians, Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners,  
Singapore Women's Hall of Fame honourees,  
Sponsors and supporters,  
Members of SCWO  
and friends

Thank you all for joining us tonight at our International Women's Day Gala Dinner, the highlight of our International Women's Month celebration.

International Women's Day is a wonderful time to reflect on our journey towards gender equality, on our achievements, and the areas in which we can improve. The 2019 IWD campaign theme is #BalanceForBetter. All of us are encouraged to seek gender balance in all aspects – gender balance is not just a women's issue. After all, women make up half the population and half the workforce. Gender balance is essential not just for the economy but for our society as well.

Although we have come far in the journey towards gender parity, there are still some areas that women need support in.

Female representation in leadership positions remains an issue. 25% of businesses in Singapore have no women in senior management positions. Women only just exceeded 10% of listed company directorships for the first time. The proportion is slightly better among the mainboard companies – 15.2%, which is a record number. Women's participation on boards has doubled since the Diversity Action Committee was formed in 2013. We have come some way since then. But is it far enough? Clearly not and thus The Council for Board Diversity has been formed. SCWO has BoardAgenda. BoardAgender's target is to achieve 20 by 2020 - 20% women representation on boards by the year 2020.

There is much to be done, but perhaps the biggest impact in our efforts to #BalanceForBetter is in the changing of mindsets. We need to adopt a balanced way of looking at roles. This can be incorporated in the simplest of means – such as by dropping unnecessarily gendered terms – “female pilot” or “female doctor” and replacing them with what they simply are – “pilot” or “doctor”. Due to culture, history and

other factors, many of us might have grown up with certain biases towards gender roles. Recognising that a lot of roles are not just a woman's role or a mother's role – it's simply a role. One example would be not to see fathers as babysitting their children for their wives, but that they are taking care of their children.

Every year, SCWO marks IWD with the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony – this will be our sixth year. We launched the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame in 2014 to recognise and celebrate the contributions of women to Singapore's growth and development. By doing so, we aim to share the stories of these outstanding women to inspire more women, and all Singaporeans. The SWHF has become a valuable archive of historical women – a wonderful resource for researchers, students, journalists – as quoted recently by the Straits Times.

The eight that will be inducted tonight are no exception – these are women who have broken through glass ceilings and detached themselves from sticky floors, who've excelled beyond expectation. They are pioneers and have played a part in shaping our society and Singapore's history. They show us that with passion, courage and commitment, nothing is impossible. I am honoured to be here to welcome these women into the Hall of Fame tonight.

The eight new inductees will join the ranks of the 152 ladies who have been inducted to the Hall of Fame. We are also honoured to have some of these ladies present here tonight such as:

President Halimah Yacob, being the first female Speaker of Parliament and now the first woman President of the Republic of Singapore, you have indeed made your mark in Singapore history. Thank you for your support of us tonight, and for the support that you have rendered over the years. It is our great honour to have you grace our celebrations tonight.

Other distinguished inductees with us tonight are:

Justice Lai Siu Chiu

Dr Aline Wong

Dr Anamah Tan

Mrs Anastasia Liew

Mrs Ivy Singh-Lim

Mrs Janet Yee

Dr Jennifer Lee

Prof. Koh Kheng Lian

Ms Patricia Chan

Thank you for being here! Our guests have a wonderful opportunity to meet and interact with these amazing women.

Tonight, I am also very happy to have with us delegates from the ASEAN Confederation of Women's Organisations (ACWO). SCWO has taken over the ACWO presidency. Through ACWO, SCWO hopes to

bring together all 10 women's national councils in the ASEAN region to promote peace, cooperation and understanding among ASEAN Women.

The ACWO delegates are in Singapore for the first ACWO 19th Board of Directors Meeting that took place yesterday. I am happy to say that it was a fruitful session, where much was discussed and strong relationships were built.

I welcome the presidents and board of:

National Council of Women of Brunei Darussalam

Cambodian Women for Peace and Development (**CWPD**)

Kongres Wanita Indonesia (**KOWANI**)

Lao Women's Union

National Council of Women's Organisations of Malaysia

Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation

National Council of Women of the Philippines

National Council of Women of Thailand

Vietnam Women's Union

Thank you for coming to celebrate IWD with us.

To show the deep appreciation I have of our friendship I have put on as many of your lovely gifts as possible except the food.

This IWD, we are also very thankful for the support of the Ministry of Social and Family Development's Office for Women Development (OWD). Over the years, we have worked closely with the OWD. One example would be the SCWO Insight series, which bring our women members together with political leaders to discuss national issues that impact on women.

I am very excited to announce the "SEEDS OF CHANGE" fund.

We are grateful to be working with the OWD to administer the "SEEDS OF CHANGE" FUND. It is our hope that this fund will help women's organisations to pilot or scale up women's development programmes. This fund will run for three years – in the first inaugural year, we will be looking to support projects that advocate or address employment matters specific to women – namely "Invest in Self" - as well as those that advocate or address health matters that impact women – that is, "Invest in Health". As the national coordinating body of women's organisations, it is our mandate to facilitate collaboration among our members. We will work with PA WIN and NTUC Women and Family Unit, who have so generously agreed to guide organisations that require help, as a value-add to this funding.

For this inaugural cycle, we will be giving applicants 6 months to apply for the funding, so we encourage organisations to take some time to think through what you plan to do before putting in an application.

We look forward to receiving your wonderful ideas and projects.

As always, this gala dinner and induction ceremony would not have been possible if not for those who work behind the scenes. Let me express my gratitude towards the members of the SWHF Working Committee chaired by Margaret Thomas, Resource Panel and the Selection Panel, chaired by Professor

Tommy Koh, for their work in identifying the women to be honoured and for the fabulous SCWO team who put this dinner together. Thank you.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in 2019, I encourage you strive to #BalanceforBetter in order to further our goal of achieving gender parity. SCWO intends to do so by working towards our mission of equal voice, equal space and equal worth for all, and we encourage everyone to join us.

It is truly my pleasure to wish everyone a very happy International Women's Day! Have a pleasant evening!