

Key Messages

- Eight inspiring women join 152 before them to be inducted in the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame
- Happy to launch the new "Seeds for Change Fund" by the Office for Women's Development in MSF. The new fund will enable women's organisations to pilot and scale up women's development programmes.
- Women in Singapore have come a long way. Our journey is still a work-in-progress and we should all build on the positive developments and support one another in this endeavour.

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT HALIMAH YACOB
AT THE SCWO INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
GALA DINNER 2019 & 6th SINGAPORE WOMEN'S HALL OF
FAME INDUCTION CEREMONY
ON SATURDAY, 23 MARCH 2019, 7PM,
AT THE ST REGIS HOTEL**

Ministers,

Dr June Goh, President SCWO

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very happy to be here to celebrate International Women's Day (IWD) with you tonight. IWD is a powerful platform to drive

positive changes for women. It is also an appropriate time to look back and take stock of our progress.

2 Over the years, we have attained good progress. For the last six years, SCWO has celebrated IWD by way of the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame (SWHF) induction ceremony. In honouring Singapore's most outstanding women through the Hall of Fame, we hope to inspire the next generation of outstanding women – to send out the message that they too can dare to dream, chart their own path and advance the cause for women in Singapore. This is a commendable mission on the part of SCWO, and I am happy to be here for this momentous occasion.

3 The 152 women already in the Hall of Fame are inspiring individuals from all walks of life - boundary breakers, record holders, change makers and trailblazers. They did what they felt was right,

pursued what they were passionate about, and in doing so, achieved great heights not only for themselves but for all of us.

4 My heartiest congratulations to the eight women who have been inducted into the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame tonight. Their contributions to Singapore have been immense and their impact on society, undeniable. They come from different sectors, broadcasting, writing, education, sports and the uniformed services. Their stories should serve to inspire our young women that there are no boundaries, and you can excel in any field that you choose so long as you are prepared to put your heart and soul into it.

5 Zahrah Za'ba was the queen of the airwaves during the 1950s and 1960s, when radio was a major influence in the Malay community. Zahrah was a multi-talented woman – not only did she run the Malay broadcasting department, but she also read the news,

did live commentary on major local events, wrote scripts, played lead roles in radio plays, produced plays and many other shows. Her contributions to the Malay broadcasting industry are tremendous.

6 Tham Yew Chin, who is popularly known as *Youjin*, never stopped writing. She has authored 191 books and written numerous travelogues, articles and essays. Her many books are immensely popular, with hordes of fans greeting her at the meet-the-author sessions organised in major Chinese cities. She is the recipient of numerous literary awards, and even has a research centre established in her honour in Chongqing University.

7 Liew Yuen Sien, former principal of Nanyang Girls' High School, took on the job at just 26 years of age. So passionate was she about women's rights and education, that she revamped the

curriculum and visited China often to learn about new teaching methods. Under her leadership, the school's enrolment grew from a few hundred to two thousand, and girls had a complete education path from pre-school to pre-university.

8 The late Evelyn Norris, an outstanding educator and former principal of Raffles Girls' School (RGS), was a dynamic and hands-on principal. She led with great foresight – conducting assembly and various activities in Malay, Tamil and Mandarin, ahead of the implementation of MOE's Mother Tongue Language policy. Evelyn Norris was so beloved and impactful as an educator that when she passed on, hundreds of RGS students turned up at her wake to pay their respects.

9 Glory Barnabas was part of the 'golden generation' in Singapore athletics which won numerous medals at the South-east

Asian Peninsular (SEAP) Games and Asian Games in the 60s and 70s. I remember the excitement of Glory's show-stopping photo finish at the 1973 SEAP Games in Singapore and was inspired by her unexpected running career. She brought home the gold for Singapore and did us proud, inspiring a whole generation of athletes. One such athlete was Kandasamy Jayamani, who as a 17-year-old, watched Glory compete at the 1973 SEAP Games and resolved to one day bring home the gold, for Singapore. Ten years later, at the SEA Games, she did just that.

10 This year we also have two outstanding women from the uniformed services. Florence Chua Siew Lian, the first female Deputy Commissioner of Police, and Gan Siow Huang, the first female Brigadier General in the Singapore Armed Forces – both of these incredible ladies pushed the boundaries in traditionally male-dominated fields, to excel and go where no other woman has gone previously.

11 These women from the Hall of Fame prove that there are no limits to what a woman can do. Each of their stories is incredibly inspiring. Please join me in congratulating them!

12 I am encouraged by the strides that women in Singapore are taking in many areas over the years, and breaking boundaries, including in male-dominated industries. Indeed, women are now broadening their horizons, with more joining science and technology-based employment and the uniformed services.

13 Yet there is still much more that can be done to support women in reaching their full potential. Today, I am happy to officially launch the new “Seeds for Change Fund” by the Office for Women’s Development in MSF. As shared by Senior Parliamentary Secretary Dr Faishal earlier this month, this new fund will enable women’s

organisations to pilot and scale up women's development programmes.

14 As the national coordinating body of women's organisations in Singapore, SCWO plays a key role in guiding and supporting other women's groups in Singapore, reaching out to over 500,000 women across more than 50 member organisations. I am glad that SCWO will be administering the Seeds for Change Fund for women's organisations. I look forward to this seed fund further enabling positive changes for women.

15 We now have 160 women who are inducted into the Hall of Fame. I am sure that when this project first started there were even some among us who were unsure whether we could find enough women to sustain it but we are now inching towards 200 names. It is not just the names that matter rather it shows that Singapore have

many talented women who have contributed and are contributing in so many different ways.

16 We have come a long way. Bur our journey is still a work-in-progress and we should all build on the positive developments and support one another in this endeavour.

Once again, Happy International Women's Day.

Thank you.
