

**Welcome Address by Junie Foo, SCWO President  
Presidents' Forum  
27 February 2021, 10.30am**

**Introduction & Welcome**

Good morning everyone!

Thank you for taking the time to join us today! Every year, at this time celebrated the CNY Lo Hei at this President's Forum. Hopefully in 2022, we will be able to once again Lo Hei with all of you!

This year is a momentous and exciting year for all of us as MSF is dedicating 2021 as the Year of Celebrating SG Women. With respect as the cornerstone of the rapport between men and women, we are invited to come together to celebrate the achievements of our women, their continued progress and their multi-faceted roles, as well as the men who help to debunk stereotypes, change mindsets and play an active role in supporting and uplifting women.

It would take a whole-of-society effort to create a better and more inclusive Singapore, through participating in this national movement, as well as creating and implementing solutions that further progress the lives of Singapore women through these Conversations and the planned White Paper.

This year SCWO will do our part in the celebrations with the many programs that have been scheduled:

**IWD 2021**

SCWO turned 40 years old last year, and we had planned an exciting celebration. This was not to be as COVID-19 took over our lives. After postponing it twice, we have decided to go ahead with the celebrations in 2021. On Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> March, we will celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary virtually, and you are all invited to join us.

To make our Ruby Celebration a more memorable and meaningful one, we will be extending our celebrations to the various crisis shelters in Singapore. Many of our guests have generously decided to donate their dinners to these women's shelters in a move to support women through this time.

**Singapore Women's Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony**

For the very first time (and we hope not the last time...) the Induction Ceremony will be held in the Istana. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> Induction Ceremony, which was similarly postponed from 2020, and will be held on IWD Day – the 8<sup>th</sup> of March with Guest-of-Honour President Halimah Yacob.

The SWHF will also be launching its first children's book, **Awesome Women of Singapore**, at the Induction Ceremony.

The SWHF has also launched **Project Awesome: Dare to Dream** - an initiative to inspire our young Singaporeans to dream big and aim high by bringing the stories of outstanding women in the Hall of Fame to schools. With your support, SWHF will be able to donate the children's book to schools and children's homes, organise events and produce educational materials for students to learn more about and interact with the amazing women role models.

The third and final installation of The Lives of Women Exhibition series will be held from October to December 2021 at the National Museum of Singapore. This installation will peer into a crystal ball and share what women's lives in Singapore might be like in 30 years with a focus on five key areas: Education, Work, Population, Leadership and Public Life.

## **Membership**

In order to continue engaging our members, we will be organising:

Firstly, the **Members Chat Session** which will be held on a regular basis to encourage networking and collaboration between members. The first of these Sessions is planned for April

Secondly, A Speaker Series - a series of webinars and/or panel discussions run by a respective member organization every other month. The series will focus on women's issues in Singapore and may highlight activities and measures taken by the representative member to combat these issues.

So do participate in these programs when we invite you to do so.

## **WR**

Women's Register will be focusing its efforts to target younger women in their final years of higher education and those who have just stepped into the working society.

We have planned an exciting line-up of events for 2021, starting with a financial literacy talk in April to educate younger women on the importance of starting financial planning at a young age. This will be followed by a series of workshops and talks that are aimed at equipping younger women with the essential skills to thrive as they step into the working world.

## **New2U**

Our very popular New2U thriftshop will move more into the digital world and online shopping. We hope by doing so we are able to jump on this digital trend and cater to a wider audience.

## **Ageing Taskforce**

The SCWO Ageing Taskforce, are working on a project with the Singapore Management University (SMU) and Republic Polytechnic (RP) to keep our seniors well-informed and safe in today's digital age. This is because fake news and inaccurate information are increasingly accessible on social media and on messaging platforms, especially through chain messages. Also, as more seniors are trying to get their hands at technology such as the use of smartphones and social media, more needs to be done to reduce the vulnerabilities seniors are faced with.

As such, SCWO will be working with the youths from SMU and RP to create informative content in the form of infographics and videos on issues affecting the seniors in Singapore. The content will then be part of a campaign and shared on social media and on messaging platforms.

This project will not only benefit seniors by keeping them well-informed in the digital era, but will also enable the youths to be more aware of ageing-related issues and to gain greater insights on Singapore as an ageing population, bringing about inter-generational understanding.

## **CCE - Character and Citizenship Education**

Together with SUSS (Singapore University of Social Sciences), United Women Singapore (UWS), SCWO is working on a programme to educate students on understanding gender norms and its impact on them, their peers and society as well as a value system that will guide them in making responsible decisions for themselves and the community - there will be an emphasis on the importance of mutual respect and treating each other equally.

## **BoardAgender**

BoardAgender turns 10 this year and we will be launching a new mentorship programme for aspiring female directors as one of our main activities this year.

## **Seeds of Change**

Last year, we had our first funding round of the **Seeds of Change Fund** which supports women's organisations to pilot or scale up women's development programmes. It was only opened to member organisations of SCWO and 14 inspiring projects from our members were selected. Most have started and are already midway through their projects.

## **MSC**

Since 2011, the Maintenance Support Central (MSC) has assisted countless financially abused women and children to understand their rights while providing them with an all-rounded support. After 10 years of service, MSC is looking into expanding our services.

For the next 3 years, MSC will focus on a 3-Year-Growth Plan which is to provide Mediation Services at SCWO. MSC will look into conducting extensive research on this, providing MSC staff with Family Mediation training and working with the Family Justice Courts and the Singapore Mediation Centre, as part of the 3-year plan.

### **Star Shelter**

In 2020, Singapore saw an increase in rates of family violence as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, safe distancing measures restricted the number of beneficiaries Star Shelter could provide refuge to. The maximum capacity of the Shelter had to be reduced to less than half. Hence this year, Star Shelter is seeking to expand and increase its capacity to reach out and help more women in need.

Besides increasing the number of beds available by extending the Shelter by another level, we also in November 2020, launched the A.C.T. Against Violence website. A one-stop information and help site regarding all forms of violence against women of all ages. With MSF's support, we are running a campaign to promote the "Helplines" available on the website. The campaign will hopefully reach out to an audience of close to 1.5 million through advertisements featured on HDB digital display panels at lift lobbies and inside the lifts.

### **CEDAW**

In preparation of the upcoming Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) cycle, SCWO will be organising 2 workshops this year.

First will be an Introduction to CEDAW, happening later in this session, which will provide an overview of CEDAW. The second workshop is aimed at equipping participants with the knowledge and resources to submit their own CEDAW report

### **Closing & Thank you**

I look forward to hearing your exciting plans for the year and I hope you will enjoy the Introduction to CEDAW later.

Let us continue to celebrate women and to work towards advancing the status of women and empowering women in Singapore together.

Have a fruitful time at our Presidents' Forum today.

Thank you!