

Closing Remarks by Mr Edwin Tong, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth and Second Minister for Law, Co-Chair of the Singapore-Shanghai Comprehensive Cooperation Council (SSCC) at the 5th SSCCC Meeting on 9 July 2024

Your Excellency Mayor Gong Zheng,

Vice Mayor Hua Yuan,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. A very good evening to all of you. It has been a pleasure to co-chair the 5th Singapore-Shanghai Comprehensive Cooperation Council (SSCCC). This meeting, I co-chair with Mayor Gong and it is a privilege for me to do so, and I would like to thank Mayor and his team for organising today's session.

2. The earlier discussions were insightful, as we reviewed the progress across the different workgroups, as well as identified new areas and opportunities to further our bilateral partnership.

3. I would like to thank all the government and business delegates for your continuous participation and contributions towards the Singapore-Shanghai cooperation.

Significance and progress of SSCCC

4. Today's meeting is also particularly meaningful, as it marks the 5th anniversary of the SSCCC.

5. Since its establishment in 2019, the SSCCC has served as an important platform in

- (1) promoting greater bilateral business and investment flows,
- (2) catalysing deeper collaborations in areas of common interests,
- (3) and driving more frequent people-to-people exchanges between Singapore and Shanghai.

6. I am heartened that at this milestone, the secretariats have worked together to refresh the key areas of collaboration, with a newly added Digital Economy pillar. This brings our areas of collaboration to six which include –

- (1) Belt & Road Initiative,
- (2) Financial Services Cooperation,
- (3) Technology and Innovation,
- (4) Urban Governance,
- (5) People-to-People Exchanges,

(6) and Digital Economy.

7. These refreshed areas of collaboration reflect the evolving and dynamic nature of our complementary strengths and interests, and further elevate our bilateral cooperation to the next level.

Progressive ties between Singapore and Shanghai

8. Economic ties between Singapore and Shanghai have made steady progress despite uncertainties in the global environment.

9. In 2023, total trade between Singapore and Shanghai increased by 7.8% year-on-year, while cumulative Singapore investments to Shanghai exceeded USD 25 billion across more than 6,300 projects.

10. We have also made good progress in driving two-way business exchanges and collaborations.

11. Shanghai, who is leading the development of the Yangtze River Delta (YRD) region, is the key partner for Singapore in driving bilateral trade and investments, as well as the main port-of-call for Singapore companies expanding into China.

12. Despite the challenging global economic conditions, Singapore companies remain interested to grow their businesses and provide value to Shanghai and the broader YRD region. For example:

- (1) Keppel launched the International Bund Gateway in October 2023, a high-quality development with exciting retail and F&B elements which supports the thriving consumer hub in the area.
- (2) During my earlier visit to Shanghai in January this year, I also attended the opening of Allen and Gledhill's first China office based in Shanghai.

13. Similarly, Singapore is a natural springboard and trusted partner for internationalising Shanghai companies that are seeking to tap on the growing opportunities in Southeast Asia.

14. We have seen greater flow of companies expanding into Singapore and Southeast Asia.

- (1) To date, Shanghai companies, such as HH Chemicals and Envision, have cumulatively embarked on more than 500 projects in Singapore, an increase of 30% from last year.

15. The two-way exchanges apply to the area of Financial Cooperation as well, where Singapore and Shanghai, as key financial gateways in Southeast Asia and China respectively, continue to strengthen capital market connectivity through internationalisation and mutual establishment of financial institutions in our respective markets.

- (1) For example, China Universal Asset Management and Guotai Junan Futures have started their operations in Singapore in recent months.

16. The MOU signed between Enterprise Singapore and the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce (SMCC), which the meeting earlier witnessed, signifies the commitment from both sides to further strengthen economic and trade cooperation, and in other areas of common interests.

Expanding partnerships in emerging areas

17. Leveraging the strong foundation built up over the years, Singapore and Shanghai can further expand into emerging areas such as the Digital and Green Economies.

18. Digital Economy is a key development priority for both Singapore and Shanghai.

- (1) At the forefront of China's digital transformation, Shanghai's digital economy is expected to reach RMB 3 trillion by 2025, accounting for more than 60% of its GDP.
- (2) Singapore's digital economy has also been growing at a CAGR of close to 13% per annum since 2017, outpacing growth of the overall economy.

19. The new Digital Economy work group should therefore work closely with agencies and companies on both sides to exchange knowledge, technical expertise, policy, and regulatory updates, particularly in the areas of digital trade and cross-border data transfer.

- (1) For example, CrimsonLogic and Shanghai Electronic Port signed a commercial agreement to embark on a potential pilot to digitalise cross-border trade and logistics to help enterprises reduce time taken and streamline processes for customs clearance.

20. Sustainability and green development are common development goals for Singapore and Shanghai in tackling the growing climate challenge.

21. In particular, the urban environment presents huge potential for green transition and decarbonisation.

- (1) Shanghai is looking at the rejuvenation of historical buildings, revitalisation of old commercial and residential areas as part of city planning, and decarbonisation of industrial parks to meet its carbon goals.
- (2) In Singapore, we are similarly rejuvenating our Central Business District in line with evolving lifestyle and consumer demands, and reimagining what our future city would look like with energy-efficiency equipment, zero-energy buildings, and intelligent energy management systems.

22. These are amongst the many aspects which we can work together on, and I hope that more Singapore companies can leverage their urban development experience and innovation green solutions to participate and contribute as a trusted partner to Shanghai's green journey.

People-to-people exchanges

23. Beyond economic fronts, the strong Singapore-Shanghai cooperation is undergirded by frequent people-to-people exchanges.

24. Following the resumption of physical SSSCC meeting in Singapore last year and the mutual 30-day visa-exemption arrangement between Singapore and China, I am happy that Singapore and Shanghai have stepped up people-to-people interactions and exchanges across different levels and different fields of interests.

25. The Health and Education agencies on both sides have established bilateral exchanges via mutual visits and participation in high-level platforms such as the Singapore-Shanghai Basic Education Roundtable Forum.

26. Faced with similar socioeconomic and governance priorities, there is indeed much value for Singapore and Shanghai to further deepen institutional exchanges on best practices and approaches in building a healthier and more inclusive society.

27. The launch of the inaugural Shanghai-Singapore Senior Officials Exchange Programme, as well as the Singapore-Shanghai Lawyers Exchange Programme provided opportunities for deepening people-to-people exchanges.

28. In fact, I am happy to note that 9 of our Singapore lawyers are here in Shanghai on a 3-month attachment with Shanghai law firms.

29. I look forward to seeing more of these initiatives that allow our talents on both sides establish deeper mutual understanding, familiarity, and trust in working together to foster more future collaborations and partnerships.

30. Several Singapore and Shanghai schools are also exploring potential partnerships on student exchange and overseas immersion programmes.

31. I encourage youths and students on both sides to proactively leverage these opportunities to exchange knowledge, establish valuable cross-border networks and deepen understanding of each other's culture.

Conclusion

32. To conclude, the SSSCC has been an important and effective platform in encouraging regular high-level exchanges and fostering new collaborations in key areas of interest.

33. Our areas of collaboration have also expanded and deepened over time to keep up with both our evolving strengths and emerging interests. This itself speaks to the can-do spirit and dynamism both our cities share.

34. I look forward to continuing the good partnership with Mayor Gong and Shanghai leaders in bringing Singapore and Shanghai's comprehensive cooperation to even greater heights.

35. Thank you very much.