

**OPENING REMARKS BY MR ONG YE KUNG,
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND COORDINATING MINISTER FOR
SOCIAL POLICIES, CO-CHAIR OF THE SINGAPORE-GUANGDONG
COLLABORATION COUNCIL (SGCC),
AT THE 16th SGCC MEETING, 25 AUGUST 2026**

尊敬的孟凡利省长

各位嘉宾

女士们、先生们

1. 大家下午好！首先，欢迎孟省长和代表团到访新加坡。我很高兴能再次与孟省长共同主持粤新合作理事会第十六次会议。
2. 世界动荡不安，科技突飞猛进，各个国家在思考如何在变局中把握机遇。今年是中国"十五五"规划开局之年，新加坡也完成了经济战略检讨，所以2026年是个重要时刻。
3. 多年来，粤新理事会一直是双方深化合作的重要平台。从早期的产业投资，克服金融风暴和新冠疫情的危机，到今天拓展更多元、更高质量的合作，我深信这一平台能够继续发挥与时俱进的作用，推动双方在新兴领域的合作。
4. 接下来，我会以英语发言。

Building on Strong Foundations, Charting a Bright Future

5. Economic ties between Singapore and Guangdong go back at least to the 1980s. As China embarked on reform and opening up, it began with the southern coastal areas. Singapore, having industrialised and opened up after our independence in 1965, became a useful reference point. What worked for Singapore could work for Chinese cities. And we know that whatever China could learn from Singapore, it would in time do better.

6. Singapore companies were among the earliest to establish themselves in the Pearl River Delta, drawn by its abundant labour pool and efficient supply chains. Beyond hard business calculations, our ties were also anchored in strong people-to-people and cultural links built over generations.

7. Over the years, we built upon this foundation. Guangdong has been Singapore's largest provincial trading partner in China for the last 37 years. In 2009, we established the Singapore-Guangdong Collaboration Council (SGCC). Later, flagship projects such as the China-Singapore Guangzhou Knowledge City (CSGKC) and the Singapore-Shenzhen Smart City Initiative added further depth and breadth.

8. We also weathered difficult periods, including the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022. Through them all, we sustained our cooperation and kept our projects moving.

9. Not every project succeeds. Even today, we continue to manage investments that have run into difficulties. I thank the local and provincial governments in Guangdong for taking a long-term view, and your understanding and support for the Singapore companies involved.

10. Today, we are in a very different world. China has grown phenomenally into a vast market, production base and innovation centre. In the process, it has lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty, spurred growth and opened up opportunities across Asia. China's rise has changed Asia, and the world. Singapore-Guangdong cooperation was one seed of this historical development. In our own small way, we helped author part of this history.

11. At the same time, technology is advancing rapidly. The global order is shifting. Climate change is intensifying. The energy landscape is evolving. I need not elaborate further. Amid these changes, new areas of cooperation can anchor our outlook in optimism and hope.

12. After all, despite setbacks to globalisation, the world remains deeply intertwined. Global trade as a percentage of global GDP is far higher than 80 years ago, and than it was when China joined the WTO in 2001. Countries still cooperate, invest and trade with one another. Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump met in May this year and agreed to establish a "constructive relationship of strategic stability" – which has helped steady the geopolitical landscape. And despite concerns over job losses and the security implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI), AI is lifting productivity across many economies.

13. This is the story and foundation of Singapore-Guangdong relations. The question now is how we take this cooperation forward in the most meaningful way.

Areas of Focus

14. In the past, Singapore-Guangdong cooperation helped catalyse China's reform and opening up, and connect China with the global economy. Today, it should build stronger bridges to integrate China's vast market, production base and innovation hub steadily and peacefully with the world.

15. To do so, we must persist in our co-operation in high-quality sectors such as advanced manufacturing, clean energy, AI and biomedical sciences. Minister of State Alvin Tan will speak about some of these projects later. We are natural partners in these promising fields. Both of us are open economies and gateways to our respective regions – Singapore to Southeast Asia, and Guangdong to the Greater Bay Area and China.

16. ASEAN, with its growing market and geopolitical centrality, is an ideal space to bring China's products and services to the world. Just as Singapore was a reference point in the past for China's reform and opening up, today we can be the catalyst, gateway and facilitator to the globalisation of China's products and services.

17. Guangdong companies such as Tencent, Ping An and BYD have already established a presence in Singapore and throughout ASEAN. Guangzhou Pharmaceutical Holdings' latest interest in doing more with Singapore, reflected in the MOUs to be signed later, shows how Singapore can support the internationalisation of Chinese biomedical companies.

18. These Chinese companies will work alongside thousands of American, European, Japanese, Korean and other companies already anchored in Southeast Asia. Many of them use Singapore as a well-run urban testbed to trial and refine AI solutions before scaling them regionally or globally.

19. From Singapore, they can synergise our capabilities in supply chains and physical connectivity. The Pearl River Delta has unrivalled supply chain efficiency and sophistication. People around the world can access many affordable consumer products because of this unique capability on China's southern coast.

20. However, for these products to reach the world, global trade flows must remain open and unimpeded. The disruption in the Strait of Hormuz reminds us that this cannot be taken for granted. The Straits of Malacca and Singapore, with PSA Singapore playing a critical interchange role, carry far more global energy and container trade than the Strait of Hormuz. We all have a stake in keeping this critical artery secure and open.

21. The supply chain capabilities that we have built painstakingly over the decades, domestically, regionally and internationally, represent an important synergy to sustain global free trade, ensure safe and reliable transit passages around the world, and keep markets open to all.

22. We can go a step further, to explore co-operation in standards and regulation, especially in the healthcare and biomedical space.

23. We can explore joint clinical trials for new drugs and joint research projects. Singapore's Health Sciences Authority (HSA) signed an MOU with China's National Medical Products Administration in May this year, renewing our shared commitment to regulatory collaboration and extending it into emerging areas such as cell, tissue and gene therapy products.

24. HSA has worked hard to be recognised globally as a reputable health regulatory agency, and is referenced by many jurisdictions. Chinese biomedical companies can consider putting their new products through HSA's rigorous evaluation, and leverage HSA's regulatory cooperation network to access markets around the world.

Conclusion

25. The coming year is significant for both Singapore and Guangdong on the regional stage.

26. Shenzhen will host the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting this November. The world will be watching closely. We hope it will make further progress in establishing norms for major powers to work and cooperate with one another, and set in motion further integration of China into the global economy.

27. Singapore will assume the ASEAN Chairmanship in 2027. We will continue to sustain and strengthen ASEAN centrality and convening power, at a time when the world needs such a platform most. We will further integrate ASEAN as a market and build stronger partnerships with the rest of the world.

28. Against this backdrop, Singapore and Guangdong, as bellwethers and pioneers in our respective regions and countries, will continue to have a special role to play. I am confident our relationship will continue to strengthen, because both sides have consistently redefined integration and connectivity for each new phase of history.

29. I thank all government and business delegates for your continued support and active participation in strengthening the Singapore-Guangdong partnership. I also wish Guangdong, especially Shenzhen, every success in hosting the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting this November.