KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY ENTERPRISE SINGAPORE MANAGING DIRECTOR MS CINDY KHOO AT THE COCOA ASSOCIATION OF ASIA'S INTERNATIONAL COCOA CONFERENCE 2026 ON 2 SEPTEMBER 2026

1 Good morning.

2 Your Excellencies and distinguished delegates and guests from around the world, a very warm welcome to Singapore. And thank you Mr. Brandon Tay, Chairman of the Cocoa Association of Asia.

3 It is a pleasure to join you at the Cocoa Association of Asia's International Cocoa Conference. This year's theme *'Good Together: Building an Agile Cocoa Future'* captures the collective ambition of stakeholders in this room to navigate shared challenges through agility. In today's uncertain and ever-changing geopolitical and macroeconomic environment, agility is not just about speed – it is about the collective capacity to adapt, collaborate and innovate across the value chain.

4 Today, I wish to share three trends that are reshaping the cocoa industry – and what they mean for us here in building an agile cocoa future.

<u>Trade smarter: With cocoa volatility as the new normal, Singapore's depth as a trading hub aims to help companies navigate uncertainties</u>

5 Let us start with the most visible trend: price volatility. Cocoa prices tripled in 2024 before falling sharply this year. Today, they remain elevated compared to historical average levels. This is not a temporary disruption. It reflects deeper structural pressures – climate stress in growing regions, supply chain uncertainty, and shifting demand patterns.

6 For companies across the value chain, navigating this volatility requires speed, information, and access to capital. As a leading agri-commodities trading hub, Singapore can play a key role. Home to over 350 global commodity trading companies, we have a strong participant network and trading ecosystem which

creates real information advantages and operational efficiencies to support players across the entire cocoa value chain – through faster decision-making, stronger risk management, and more competitive financing options.

7 This is why leading cocoa and chocolate players have chosen Singapore as their regional and global base. Companies looking to manage complexity across the cocoa supply chain can leverage Singapore's trading, logistics and financing infrastructure to keep cocoa flows moving, and to turn uncertainty into advantage.

8 For example, tapping on Singapore's strong AI and technology capabilities, Olam Food Ingredients (ofi) set up its AI Centre of Excellence here, where it developed Project Infinity, its next-generation decision intelligence platform to address price volatility in the cocoa sector. With the right talent to bridge AI and commodities trading, and a trading hub ecosystem to test and refine AI models in real time, ofi was able to streamline complex financial simulation cycles from weeks to seconds, centralise trading and market intelligence, and strengthen portfolio risk management.

<u>Innovate faster: From 'more cocoa' to 'different cocoa', the Asia cocoa industry can leverage Singapore's innovation ecosystem to meet the demands of the changing chocolate consumer</u>

9 This brings us to the second trend. Price volatility doesn't stop at the trading desk. It ripples through the entire value chain – reshaping consumer demand, driving reformulation, and accelerating innovation.

10 As a robust agrifood hub over 200 agrifood startups, venture capital firms, accelerators and research institutions – combined with our location as a gateway to fast-growing Asian markets – Singapore is a good place to help cocoa players connect with partners in the region and grow their innovation capabilities.

11 And the ecosystem is growing. Earlier this year, Barry Callebaut launched its Global Innovation Centre (GIC) in Singapore, bringing together its Artificial Intelligence (AI) Centre of Excellence (CoE) for chocolate and cocoa, and global CoE for Cacao Coatings. Combining the capabilities from both centres allow Barry Callebaut to harness AI to innovate faster, develop cacao coating innovations that respond to shifting consumer demand and price dynamics, and capture emerging market opportunities.

12 This reflects how Singapore’s ecosystem has reached a new level of maturity – one that can support not just the trading, but the thinking and innovation that will define the cocoa and chocolate industry's future.

<u>Make green count: Sustainability has moved from aspiration to a business imperative. Singapore will partner the industry to build sustainable growth</u>

13 The third trend is the shift to having sustainability as a key business imperative to remain relevant and competitive. As sustainability requirements are increasingly embedded into global supply chains, companies that adapt are often better positioned to manage risks, build resilience against disruptions, and access new markets and customers. Moreover, with the EU Deforestation Regulation expected to take effect from December 2026, companies that have invested in traceability and sustainable sourcing will find themselves more competitive.

14 For an industry whose supply chains begin with smallholder farmers nurturing cocoa pods, and end with a consumer unwrapping a bar of chocolate halfway across the world, sustainability must be inclusive and viable across the entire value chain. I am therefore pleased to acknowledge the CAA's pledge of support today for the ASEAN One Billion Trees Initiative. This is a meaningful demonstration of practical, private-sector commitment to sustainable development and climate resilience, with real potential to mobilise financing through carbon markets.

15 And carbon markets have an important role to play in a sustainable cocoa value chain. The challenge for many cocoa-growing regions is that sustainable practices – agroforestry, reforestation, soil restoration – require upfront investment that smallholder farmers cannot always afford. Carbon markets can change this equation – by tapping market forces to attract financing and create value for stakeholders across the value chain, from farmers to investors.

16 We are doing our part in drawing investment into carbon projects. Our ecosystem is already home to more than 160 carbon services companies, ranging from project developers to traders and integrity service players. Earlier this year, we launch the Action for a Resilient Climate (ARC) Coalition. It aggregates corporate demand for high-integrity carbon credits and channels financing towards the projects that generate them. This industry-led, multi-sector initiative shows how Singapore can mobilise collective action to support carbon markets at scale.

17 I am also pleased to announce that leading soft commodities trader ECOM will expand its APAC trading hub in Singapore, with the establishment of its global carbon desk here. This move will leverage Singapore's carbon services and trading ecosystem, integrate carbon credits into ECOM's commodity businesses, and allow the company to explore new market opportunities.

18 Let me conclude.

19 The cocoa industry faces real headwinds. But it also faces real opportunities. An agile cocoa future will ride on three imperatives.

20 The first is to 'trade smarter'. Volatility is not going away. The companies that thrive will be those that build the information advantages, risk management capabilities, and financing structures to turn uncertainty into opportunity.

21 The second is to 'innovate faster'. Consumer expectations are shifting, supply chains are under pressure, and the window to adapt is shorter than it has ever been. What we are seeing in the industry's innovative activities here shows

what is possible when companies invest in building capabilities, not just optimising existing ones.

22 The third is to ‘make green count’. Sustainability is a shared responsibility, it can generate real value for communities, businesses and consumers alike. Carbon markets, green financing, traceability are not just tools for managing risk. They are the building blocks of the next chapter of sustainable growth for the industry.

23 Trade smarter. Innovate faster. Make green count. Singapore is committed to being a trusted partner to the Asia cocoa industry on all three fronts.

24 I wish you a productive and insightful conference ahead.

25 Thank you.