

**Speech by Chairwoman of PAP Women's Wing Mrs Josephine Teo at PAP
Women's Wing's Mother's Day Celebrations at NTUC Centre on
7 May 2022**

Parliamentary colleagues

Comrades and Sisters from the NTUC

Friends

1. Good afternoon! I am very pleased to see so many familiar as well as new faces here today. Let me first wish all the mummies in the room, a very *Happy Mother's Day!*
2. This is a very special year to be celebrating Mother's Day, and there are several reasons for this.
3. For the last two years, COVID-19 has disrupted the way we celebrated many family traditions – including Mother's Day.
 - a. Family gatherings were scaled down. We all experience it. Mother's Day became a much-muted affair in most families - mine included.
 - b. For the PAP Women's Wing, you may recall that in 2019, we organised a Bicentennial Tribute to Mothers and named a new breed of orchids, the Aranda Mothers of Singapore. Some of you are wearing this button, all the way back in 2019, three years ago.
 - c. But in 2020, we could not hold any celebration; and in 2021, we had to pivot to an online charity show! It was an experiment generated, views were encouraging, exceeded 60,000 views.
 - d. And now, to be able to hold this Mother's Day event physically – with a bazaar for a meaningful cause – is truly great way to get back together, and to recognise the many contributions of our mothers.
4. Let me first thank our WW Exco Central District Advisor Comrade Joan Pereira and your team for this very event's theme.
 - a. For the meaningful event theme – to shine the spotlight on our caregivers.
 - b. We stand in strong solidarity with our caregivers; many of whom are women!
5. Another reason why this year's Mother Day's event is so special is because it comes hot on the heels of a major milestone for *all* Singapore women.

- a. Just last month in April, MPs had a marathon debate in Parliament on the White Paper on Women's Development. The debate took nine and half hours.
- b. It is the first time in Singapore's history that there's been such a White Paper. This fact alone is significant.
- c. More than 30 of our PAP MPs spoke.
- d. They offered useful suggestions to catalyse further collective actions in support of women's development; and how as a nation we can realise greater equality of partnership between women and men.
- e. Once again, I would like to thank all our PAP MPs – both men and women – amongst them, for being our champions.
- f. I will not be able to name them all, but they include Comrades Dr Wan Rizal, Tin Pei Ling, Yeo Wan Ling, Zhulkarnian, Louis Ng, Hany Soh and Vikram Nair who all spoke passionately. Shall we give them a round of applause?

6. While Women's Development will always be a journey without end, we appreciate the Government's commitment to this major milestone.

7. I want to also recognise our activists from WW and YP for contributing to our own Joint Paper on Women' Development.

- a. While this took place *last year*, I can assure you that the inputs from our paper were *considered* and *incorporated* into the Government's White Paper that was endorsed in Parliament.
- b. Many of you provided your candid views for this paper, while others have helped to gather the whopping 1,500 inputs!
- c. Special thanks to Dr Janil Puthucheary, Chairman of the YP and Comrades Carrie Tan, Cheng Li Hui, Cheryl Chan, Mr Eric Chua, Ms Poh Li San and many more, for this Paper.

8. Some of you may remember last year as the 'Year of Celebrating SG Women', and this year is the 'Year of Celebrating SG Families'.

- a. When we celebrate Mother's Day against the backdrop of these two commemorative years, it just brings to mind the key role mothers play in our families.

- b. Our mothers love and protect us, always looking out for our interests.
- c. Our mothers teach us good values and help us to develop our character.
- d. Our mothers hold our families together, and in doing so keep our society strong.

9. And while gender perceptions are shifting, women are quite often still the primary caregivers in society.

10. I cannot stress enough how precious are caregivers are.

- a. They often put the priorities and needs of those who care for before their own.
- b. Lest we forget, they too *need* and *deserve* our care and support.

11. In the White Paper, the Government had announced that more support and higher subsidies will be made available.

- a. Schemes like Silver Support and the matching of CPF top-ups help them in retirement, as many caregivers may not have a chance to earn higher incomes during their working years.
- b. We have also made major moves to make quality preschools more accessible and affordable to families to enable working parents, especially mothers, to pursue their career aspirations with peace of mind.

12. But beyond the Government's efforts, the community too has an important role to play.

- a. This is why the Women's Wing is stepping up on our efforts to rally the community to build an ecosystem of support for our caregivers.
- b. We want them to know that we are behind them, and they are not alone.
- c. We want to give them the confidence to still have dreams and aspirations; and help them chart the way forward!
- d. So, let us take it upon ourselves to do it in the best possible ways.

13. As part of our efforts in enabling caregivers and shining a spotlight on their contributions, we have invited two mothers to share about their caregiving journeys.

- a. Ms Ann Chong, a mother of two, who has an 18-year-old son with special needs. Ann faced many challenges raising her children when her husband passed away from leukaemia.
- b. Thankfully, people around her stepped up. Her employer allowed her to bring her son Si Jun to work, so that she can manage her work and caregiving duties. Si Jun's teacher also provided Ann with much support by nurturing Si Jun's artistic talents.
- c. Today, Ann is paying it forward. Now, Ann has set up a company to provide opportunities for individuals with special needs to showcase their talents.
- d. We also have Ms Yasmin Nisha who looks after four children She is the primary caregiver to her 69-year-old grandmother. She has brought two daughters. She remains positive and she wants to set up a home-based baking business when her children are older.
- e. So we will have the chance to hear from Ann and Yasmin. Thank you, Ann, and Yasmin for sharing your stories, which will surely help to inspire other caregivers.

14. Let me know say a few words in Mandarin.

15. 明天是母亲节，在此，我预祝大家母亲节快乐！

16. 受冠病疫情的影响，我们过去两年的母亲节都没办法和大家聚在一起。今年，我们终于可以和大家一同欢庆母亲节，而我很高兴人民行动党妇女团特地为今年的庆祝活动拟定一个别具意义的主题，把焦点放在看护者的身上。

17. 虽然性别观念正逐渐改变，但如今绝大部分的看护者还是女性，有很多看护者是我们今天要感谢的母亲！

18. 人民行动党妇女团今天把焦点放在看护者身上，就是希望起一个推动的作用，推动整个社会，采取实际的行动来支持和肯定看护者。

19. 看护者，无论性别，有他们各自的需要、梦想和抱负。

20. 因此，我们希望不论是个人或是企业，都能把自己看成一个‘推动者’，无论是在促进工作场所的平等待遇、在办公场所制定灵活的工作安排、分担家务责任，还是倾听他们的心声方面，我希望大家都能尽一份努力，提供我们的看护者更强而有力的支持。

21. As part of PAP Women's Wing's tradition for Mother's Day, we will also be raising funds to help the vulnerable in society. Joan has touched on them.

a. We hope our efforts can inspire everyone to do something for the disadvantaged and vulnerable among us.

22. To conclude, comrades, tomorrow is Mother's Day. Let us pay tribute and honour all our mothers through the generations.

23. Let us also commit to each do our best today and every day, to always build a brighter tomorrow for all our mothers and everyone they love.

24. Thank you!