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OPENING ADDRESS BY PAP WOMEN'S WING CHAIRWOMAN SIM ANN AT PAP WOMEN'S WING CONFERENCE 2023 ON 29 JULY 2023

PAP Women's Wing has been pushing for changes to improve the lives of women in Singapore, and also for women and men to partner each other as equals.

We do this in the following ways: **Mobilisation**: working through our volunteers and branches, as well as partners; people who are like-minded to build our communities and care for fellow Singaporeans. Hence, we established a tradition of fundraising for social causes. For example, for this year's Mother's Day, WW partnered PCF to raise more than \$600,000 in terms of assistance for mothers and children in need. Many of the branches are in the process of disbursing this. During IWD 2023, we launched a digital collection showcasing our branches in action in support of Forward SG.

Celebrating the achievements of SG Women: We have been doing this consistently. 2023 Mother's Day: created a digital collection of inter-generational recipes contributed by our longtime community volunteers and their families.

Policy advocacy: We have done so since the early days of the Party, beginning with the Women's Charter. We strive to increase support and opportunities for women to realise their potential. We ensure women's needs, voices and perspectives are fully reflected in our society.

In 2021, in support of the Conversations on Women's Development, the Women's Wing submitted a joint report to the government consisting of 12 recommendations including: the introduction of legislation to regulate merit-based employment and penalise discriminatory conduct to achieve more diverse and inclusive workplaces; partner organisations and employers to develop holistic support packages and support networks for women to re-enter the workforce and rebuild their careers; increase financial support to caregivers of seniors to help relieve financial strain; organise voluntary respite services for caregivers; raise the awareness of support programmes; and allow egg-freezing.

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More than half of these recommendations have taken off either through government policy reviews or initiatives by our MPs and partner organisations, many of whom are present today.

We just didn't stop there. During IWD 2022 – we focused on taking action to enhance online safety for women and girls. We launched a toolkit for our volunteers to refer to when supporting residents facing Online Harms (by Hany Soh, Nadia Samdin and MP Zhulkarnain).

Today, we are once again in policy advocacy mode.

The theme for this year's WW Annual Conference is "Support for SG Families".

This topic is very apt as we face declining TFR, rapidly ageing population and tight labour market. Many of you would recall that we have been soliciting inputs throughout the years.

Don't get us wrong – supporting families is not something only for women to handle. This cannot be.

In fact, it requires whole-of-society effort: Government must continue to place this high on the agenda; employers and industry leaders need to be facilitative; men and women need to change mindsets about gender roles and how caregiving and household duties should be shared.

But whole-of-society solutions must be signed off and endorsed by the women.

They must make sense to: Women balancing work and careers with being wives and moms; women, whether married or single, caregiving for parents or other family members; older women being tapped on to care for their grandchildren while seeking to pursue their own interests; younger women charting out their lives and wondering what choices to make and whether the trade-offs are worthwhile. We hope to have more positive answers.

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Without women's full participation and inputs, we cannot find lasting breakthroughs – especially to the long-term challenge of low TFR.

And this is what Comrade Siow Huang and her team have been doing - involving women from all walks of life and hear their thoughts and needs.

I look forward to the presentations and panel discussion on this topic, featuring Comrade Min Indranee and a diverse group of speakers.

Let's inspire wider action and collaboration.

Together with our partners, we will push for more support, more resources and services that will enable women to be cared for, supported, and to thrive in every aspect of their lives – so that women, in turn, may best support their families while having the confidence to pursue their ambitions.

And in doing so doing this, we need women to be energised and we need alignment with the men today.