

OPENING OF SMEICC CONFERENCE 2022

WELCOME ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT KHO CHOON KENG

13 SEPTEMBER 2022

SUNTEC CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE

尊敬的通讯及新闻部长兼内政部第二部长杨莉明女士，

各国外交使节，政府部门长官，

大会分享嘉宾，

马来西亚、泰国和韩国的海外代表团，

总商会董事及会员，

女士们，先生们，

大家早上好！

我谨代表新加坡中华总商会，热烈欢迎大家来到一年一度的中小企业大会！

今年的中小企业大会迎来了25周年，恰逢疫情缓和，阔别两年再次回到新达城会展中心举办实体大会，可喜可贺！总商会的中小企业大会是一个宝贵的平台，赋能中小企业的领导们，紧随时代步伐，洞察商机；并且深入交流，相互借鉴，集思广益。

过去25年来，总商会年复一年不懈努力，致力打造新加坡首屈一指的双语企业大会品牌，诚邀杰出的海内外主讲嘉宾分享真知灼见。

今天，我们很荣幸邀请到人工智能领域的领军人物——李开复博士远道而来给我们做主旨演讲。这将会是一场令人大开眼界、思想激荡的企业盛宴，为企业家做好准备，应对眼前急剧变化的商业环境。

接下来，我将以英语继续演讲：

This year marks the 25th anniversary of SMEICC Conference. As the pandemic stabilises, we are very happy to physically hold the conference at Suntec Convention & Exhibition Centre again after two years!

Over the last 25 years, through consistent effort year after year, SCCCI remains committed to excel on Singapore's most prominent bilingual business conference by gathering outstanding speakers from Singapore and abroad to share their invaluable insight.

The last two and a half years has been challenging for businesses. As a result of our government's effective and successful management of the COVID-19 situation, Singapore economy has recovered strongly from the pandemic. Notwithstanding, we will be encountering a more complex business environment riddled with geopolitical tensions, inflationary pressures, and supply chain disruptions.

While the external environment remains volatile and uncertain, our companies must continue to transform, innovate, and upgrade their capabilities to weather the challenges ahead.

We have therefore set the theme of this year's conference as:
"Ascending Beyond: Collaborate. Differentiate. Evolve. Forward
Focus".

I am pleased to note that the number of participants attending this year's SMEICC exceeds 3,000. And in this year's event, we have put together more than 60 speakers to share their experiences and insights over two days.

We have curated an exciting program that we hope will help you steer your business forward in this new business landscape. I would like to especially thank Dr Kai-Fu Lee, our Keynote Speaker and a renowned expert in the field of artificial intelligence, to share his perspectives with us, given today's complex and highly digitized economy.

Key findings from SCCCI's 2022 Annual Business Survey

I am also delighted to announce that SCCCI has conducted our annual business survey conducted in June to August this year. We thank the more than 1,000 members for supporting this survey, of which about 90% are SMEs. Let me share some selected findings here.

The survey this year revealed that businesses are generally recovering from the impact of COVID-19. This year, 38% of the respondents have projected that their revenue would increase, compared to 26% last year. On the other hand, 75% indicated that they faced an increase in business cost, compared to 57% last year. 72% of respondents forecast to generate profits this year compared to 28% who projected losses. 57% of the respondents indicated that they have maintained their workforce.

While the top 3 challenges confronting businesses based on our survey are: (1) Rising business costs; (2) Availability of suitable manpower; and (3) Inflationary pressures, the top 3 manpower challenges would be: (1) Rising manpower costs; (2) Not able to recruit local staff with the skills they need; and (3) More difficult to get foreign workers. To manage their manpower challenges, 54% indicated that they will transform, automate and/or digitize their business to reduce manpower needs.

About 68% of the respondents have applied for government assistance schemes; with the top 3 schemes being: (1) Digitalisation and adopting technology; (2) Hiring, developing and retaining employees; and (3) Business transformation and pursuing innovation.

Rich and practical content offered by SMEICC 2022

This year's SMEICC will address some of the feedback and concerns of our SMEs. Collectively, the various conference tracks will cover SMEs' concerns in the areas of operating in a

new business landscape, innovating their businesses, digitalization and harnessing new technologies, as well as venturing overseas in a new normal, pursuing sustainability and transforming family businesses.

On a more relaxing topic, you can also look forward to finding out more about how the future workplace will look like, and how you can tap on government schemes as you revamp your business.

SCCCI remains committed to help our members

While business conditions in Singapore have improved since two years ago, there remain considerable headwinds. SCCCI will continue to excel to work with our members as they transform, develop new capabilities, and seek new growth. We have been actively helping our members to engage government agencies to address their challenges on the ground, including manpower and policy issues.

At the industry and sector level, we are also assisting our trade association members to embark on industry transformation and upgrading that is aligned with Singapore's Industry Transformation Maps (ITMs).

The SME Centre at SCCCI offers advice and assistance to you to tap on government schemes to transform and go digital; whereas our Institute of Business can advise and guide you on skills upgrading and training.

Staying attuned to the rapid development of the digital economy, we are also equipped with live studio facilities at the Trade Association Hub to enable our members to leverage on online channels to promote their Singapore products and brands.

Singapore is a small market. SCCCI will help our members to scale up their businesses and expand their business networks overseas. As we emerge from the pandemic and with the continued easing of travel measures, we will step up our

initiatives to assist you to re-connect with opportunities in ASEAN. For companies aspiring to venture into China, we have offices in Shanghai, Chengdu and Chongqing that offer a variety of in-market assistance.

Sustainability is a megatrend that no serious-minded SME who is in for the long haul can ignore. Recognising that SMEs need more help to embrace sustainability practices, Chamber will roll out various initiatives to help our members to enhance their understanding of what sustainability entails, build new capabilities in sustainability, and tap into opportunities in the green economy.

Going forward, SCCCI will continue to partner the Government to help our SMEs overcome their near-term challenges, transform, upskill and tap into new growth opportunities. While noting that the economic recovery is uneven across industries, where necessary, we hope that the government will continue to help local businesses who remain affected, especially if they are

essential to Singapore economy and support our economic priorities.

Conclusion

In closing, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Minister Mrs Josephine Teo for being the Guest of Honour of this year's SMEICC. I would also like to thank all our sponsors, partners and government agencies, especially e2i, IMDA and Enterprise Singapore for their support, and for partnering Chamber to make this conference possible. To all our delegates, I encourage you to participate actively over the next two days, to gain fresh insights and find new connections. I wish everyone a fruitful and productive session ahead, and success in your business!

Thank you!

最后，我祝大家有个成功与丰收的两天，我也衷心希望各位的业务蒸蒸日上，大展宏图。
