



**PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**STATEMENT BY MS TAI LI-LIAN,
DELEGATE TO THE 66TH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ON AGENDA ITEM 28 (A),
ON ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN,
THIRD COMMITTEE,
11 OCTOBER 2011**

Mr Chairman,

Thank you for giving me the floor. Those of us who have been following the discussion in this Committee so far would have heard inspiring statements and perspectives on gender equity as well as the steps and measures taken by member countries in advancing the interests of women in their own countries.

Mr Chairman,

2 Singapore is committed to gender equality and the empowerment of women. As such, we believe in an equal opportunity policy for both sexes. There are no barriers or obstacles to women's participation in all sectors of society. Meritocracy is entrenched as a guiding principle of the Singapore society. Singapore's physical limitations have impressed upon us the importance of maximising the potential of every individual, male or female. We cannot afford to discriminate against any gender. Through gender equality, women in Singapore can participate and contribute fully and equally to the socio-economic development of the country.

3 As such, Singapore is fully committed to our obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). We were pleased to present our Fourth Periodic Report to the CEDAW Committee this July. There, a high-level delegation, headed by our Minister of State for Community Development, Youth and Sports, Madam Halimah Yaacob, highlighted some of the key recent developments in Singapore's policies and programmes. Some of the milestones included legislative amendments to further protect young women and girls from commercial sex exploitation and enhance the management of child protection cases, as well as programmes to enhance maternity benefits and protection. In addition, Singapore announced a narrowing of the scope of our reservations to CEDAW, following significant developments on the practice of sharia law in Singapore, as well as measures

to enhance the protection of women migrant workers and to sustain the fight against trafficking in persons.

Mr Chairman,

4 Let me also share some aspects of Singapore's overall approach to advancing the status of women. International Women's Day on 8 March 2011 focused on equal access to education, training and, science and technology, something that Singapore firmly believes in. With people as our only natural resource, it follows that investing in human resource development is a priority. The Singapore Government is committed to providing all Singaporeans with equal access to quality education. Singapore believes that education is fundamental to individual development and must be given equally to all our citizens.

5 To ensure that all Singaporean children are equipped with a common core of knowledge, the Government passed the Compulsory Education Act in 2003, which mandates compulsory education for the first 6 years of primary education. The Government ensures education is affordable for all through subsidies and financial assistance. As a result, Singapore has a high literacy rate for women, at 93.8%. Female students make up more than half the full-time intake at local universities and are now well-represented in traditionally male-dominated subjects.

6 With more educational opportunities, many of our women are choosing to work thus allowing them greater career options and financial independence. Along with this, stereotypes of women's roles are disappearing and women today are no longer confined to homemaker roles. The female labour force participation rate in Singapore has increased from below 30% in the 1970s to 56.5% in 2010. The aspirations of Singapore women have risen in tandem with the opportunities available to them. Women today make their own choices in terms of careers and lifestyle. Their financial independence allows them to have options. With the educational prerequisites, Singapore women are making huge inroads into leadership positions in the public, private and non-profit sectors.

7 Due to our committed efforts to empower women and improve their welfare, Singapore was ranked 10th out of 138 countries on the UN Gender Inequality Index. This indicates that our women enjoy the same educational, economic and political opportunities as well as healthcare standards as our men. At the same time, while we have made much progress, we recognise that there remain many challenges and other areas in which we can continue to improve. In a highly competitive and globalised world, ensuring that women's skills remain relevant and up-to-date to meet the demands of new technology, so that they can continue to take advantage of the good employment opportunities that are created, is a constant challenge.

8 Hence, women in Singapore enjoy training opportunities to equip them with the relevant skills to remain and progress in the workforce. In 2010, women made up half of the 270,000 workers trained under the Workforce Skills Qualification system. In the same year, 30% of female residents aged 15 to 64 years in the labour force had engaged in job-related structured training or education activities¹, as compared to 28% of male residents. In fact over the last ten years, the percentage of training incidence for economically active women has been higher than men.

Mr Chairman,

9 As Singapore celebrates the achievements of its women, it is important that we retain our individual and collective responsibility to ensure that we continue to place a premium on the welfare and advancement of women. In this regard, Singapore reaffirms our commitment to renewing our efforts. Thank you.

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¹ Job-related structured training or education refers to training that is related to a current or future job. It includes classroom training, private lessons, correspondence courses, workshops, seminars, structured on-the-job training and apprentices training.

