Mr Chairman,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

1 The Singapore delegation would like to express our appreciation to the United Nations ESCAP for organising this 75th Commission.

2 Singapore firmly believes that everyone, especially the most vulnerable, should be empowered to make the most of every opportunity to better their lives. In this regard, please allow me to share some of Singapore’s initiatives to support social mobility, while also providing more targeted support for the vulnerable.

3 Under our social compact, the Government ensures access to affordable basic services, creates opportunities for growth, provides institutional support and an enabling environment for individuals as they work hard to look after themselves and their families, with support from the community. Where individuals are unable to provide for themselves or when family and community support are inadequate, there are social safety nets in place.

4 In addition to catering for the retirement needs, employment, home ownership, healthcare and education of all citizens, the Singapore Government provides more targeted assistance for the low-income, vulnerable and those with specific needs. For example, we have made major investments in our preschools and school system to ensure that every child has access to quality education and a good start in life, regardless of income. For healthcare, we adopt a multi-tiered approach to ensure that no Singaporean is denied access to healthcare due to financial difficulties.

Mr Chairman,

5 Singapore believes that everyone is differently-abled and can do well in life given the right support and opportunities. To this end, we have embarked on three Enabling Masterplans to chart our direction towards a more caring and inclusive society, where persons with disabilities or special needs are empowered to participate fully in our society. For example, for children with developmental needs, we aim to give them a good start in life by ensuring they have timely access to quality Early Intervention services. We support students as they move from school to the next stage of life through programmes that match students who are
able to work, to suitable training and employment pathways based on their strengths and interests.

Mr Chairman,

6 The world’s population is ageing. According to data from the World Population Prospects, the number of older persons aged over 60 is expected to more than double by 2050 and to more than triple by 2100. Singapore’s life expectancy at birth has risen from 83.2 years in 2010 to 84.8 years in 2017. Given that Singaporeans are living longer, healthier lives, longevity is also an opportunity to be embraced.

7 Our Action Plan for Successful Ageing, announced in 2015, is a national blueprint to help Singaporeans age confidently and lead active lives. At the individual level, we have created opportunities for seniors to continue working and learning. For example, we established the National Silver Academy in 2016, which offers more than 1000 courses on a wide range of topics such as health and wellness, financial adequacy and digital literacy to support the aspirations of seniors to continue learning. The Singapore Health Promotion Board has also rolled out a National Seniors’ Health Programme to empower seniors to take charge of their health.

8 We have made hardware improvements, building a comprehensive suite of facilities to transform Singapore into a City for All Ages where our seniors can age gracefully.

Mr Chairman,

9 Modern Singapore was built on the efforts of our men and women. While Singapore has come a long way since then, achieving equality is a dynamic process and a work in progress. To this end, Singapore has instituted multiple policies and measures to empower our women further.

10 Singapore established the Council for Board Diversity to promote the representation of women on the boards of companies and organisations. The Council does so by engaging stakeholders on the appointment of women onto boards and raising awareness on the importance of board diversity. To keep women’s employment rate high, Singapore facilitates employment opportunities and helps women meet their career and family responsibilities. The Adapt and Grow (A&G) initiative of Singapore helps jobseekers find jobs, including women who wish to return to the workforce. We support the provision of flexible work
arrangements so that women can stay in the workforce. We also actively engage with civil society, such as the Singapore Council of Women Organisations, to conceive programmes for women’s development.

Mr Chairman, Excellencies,

11 As we move further into the digital age, we must be cognisant that upgrading our “hardware” must come hand-in-hand with improvements to our “heart”-ware, our people. Singapore will continue working hand-in-hand with ESCAP and its member countries to build an inclusive and equal society for all. Thank you.

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