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**SPEECH BY MR TAN CHUAN-JIN, MINISTER OF STATE FOR  
NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MANPOWER, AT THE  
INAUGURAL ASTD-STADA ASIA PACIFIC (ASAP) CONFERENCE  
2011, 16 NOVEMBER 2011, 9.15 AM, SANDS EXPO & CONVENTION  
CENTRE, MARINA BAY SANDS SINGAPORE**

Mr Tony Bingham, President & CEO, American Society for Training & Development (ASTD)

Mr Lim Khia Tat, President, Singapore Training and Development Association (STADA)

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

### **Introduction**

I am pleased to join you today at the inaugural ASTD-STADA Asia Pacific (ASAP) Conference 2011. This is the first time in its 67 years of history that ASTD is holding its conference outside the US. We are proud that it has chosen to do so in Singapore in partnership with STADA. The hosting of the ASAP Conference 2011 here in Singapore marks a milestone in the Government's efforts to position Singapore as a hub for human capital development (HCD). We are happy that ASTD and STADA have come together to make it happen.

5. Secondly, as global companies shift their business focus to set up business networks and expand their markets in Asia, they will face evolving challenges in human capital development. This makes the transfer of knowledge and skills between the West and East increasingly important.

6. As wage pressures grow around the world and talent becomes more mobile, businesses need to focus on increasing their productivity to improve their business offerings and create higher-value jobs. It is no longer viable to attract and retain human capital through higher salaries.

7. Instead, talent are placing growing importance on other developmental factors such as training opportunities, career prospects and job satisfaction in their career considerations. In a world where knowledge and talent become increasingly critical advantages in the global competition, so does the importance of human capital development.

#### **The ASTD-STADA Asia Pacific (ASAP) Conference 2011**

8. The theme of this conference - "Real World Human Capital Development Solutions for the New Asia Economy", is both timely and relevant for initiating this knowledge-sharing process. More than 80

11. The study revealed four diversity-related dilemmas stemming from national, organisational, geographical and demographic differences, which impact the performance of a workforce. In order to strengthen and develop the sustainability of Asian Pacific economies - education, training and development policies need to be convergent, supportive and enabling of two complementary components. First, education and training should be supportive of developing **skills and knowledge** of cultural differences – so that the younger and future generation of workers have a higher level of knowledge about the world at large.

12. Second, education and training should be supportive of developing **effective behaviours** that enable the application of this knowledge of different cultures. This is not only to avoid embarrassing situations that may arise due to cultural faux pas, and prevent cultural misunderstandings. More importantly, it celebrates cultural differences and leverages on these different points of view to strengthen our economies further, by creating new solutions that build on the different contributions that other societies can offer. These learnings have relevance for Singapore – a global talent capital.

16. Given these findings, IAL has initiated a major undertaking to help improve the adoption of effective workplace learning by aligning standards, curricula and programme design with workplace learning and assessment. This includes developing a practical framework of workplace learning, drawing on extensive research worldwide, to address diverse human capital needs and organisational circumstances.

### **Preparing for the Challenges Ahead**

17. To encourage new and innovative ideas for the enhancement of workforce learning, and in turn improve our workers' employability and competitiveness, the Singapore Government has aside \$3 million for the CET Innovation Fund where training providers and professionals can tap on to pilot new and innovative CET methodologies. So far, close to \$1 million has been committed to fund various innovative CET projects since the fund was launched one year ago.

18. In addition, IAL is developing a **New Media Learning Masterplan** which aims to strengthen the national CET infrastructure by harnessing social media and new media platforms.

opportunities for the learners to develop and showcase their ability as a trainer and assessor. By posting their experiences and views on their own blogs, their assessor can already start to assess them, even while the course is still on-going.

22. Education is both an art and science. There are sound principles, but it is also highly individualised. We want to walk the talk, by recognising that adults come in with their own experiences and viewpoints, and to harness that to create a learning experience that is highly personalised and deep. What this translates to is a highly-facilitated course that gives learners room to share their experiences and develop new insights in a group-based environment. This requires a re-thinking in the way learning and assessments are done in a competency-based environment.

23. This approach, as of now, is an evolutionary one. We are refining our prototypes as we find out what works and what does not. At the end of the day, what is most important is the learner's experience – which should be personalised, reflective, practice-based and comfortable, in order for learning to be truly effective.