

**SPEECH BY MR S ISWARAN, MINISTER FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY  
(INDUSTRY) AT THE QUALITY & STANDARDS CONFERENCE ON 27 JULY  
2016, 9.05AM AT CENTRAL BALLROOM, RESORTS WORLD CONVENTION  
CENTRE**

Mr Edwin Khew, Chairman of the Singapore Standards Council,

Mr Renny Yeo, Chairman of the Singapore Accreditation Council,

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

**Introduction**

1. It gives me great pleasure to join you this morning to commemorate 50 years of Quality and Standards (Q&S) development in Singapore. This occasion is especially meaningful, as we have among us many technical experts and professionals who have made significant contributions in building up the Q&S infrastructure that we have today.

2. Our Q&S ecosystem is helmed by the industry-led Singapore Standards Council (SSC) and Singapore Accreditation Council (SAC), and comprises three components – standards, accreditation and conformity assessment. Over the 50 years of our Q&S journey, we have built up a robust Q&S value chain that has helped to facilitate trade and strengthen Singapore's economic competitiveness. The adoption of standards and use of accredited services have helped our companies to improve productivity, reduce costs and meet international benchmarks for practices, systems and performance. This has, in turn, enhanced Singapore's reputation for quality and reliability, and earned us the trust of partners around the world.

**Q&S Enables the Future Economy**

3. Even as we celebrate 50 years of achievement, we need to look to the future. Q&S will play an increasingly important role in the future economy. In addition to consolidating our position as a trusted hub for business, Q&S can also play a key role in supporting innovation and sustaining the competitiveness of our future economy. Often, Q&S is the less glamorous side of the work that we do – it is in the background, and not everyone truly appreciates its value. Without that, and the strong framework and infrastructure that supports it, we do not have the foundations for the economy that is going to differentiate itself in terms of innovation and competitiveness.

4. Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, announced the new Q&S vision – Quality and standards as a key pillar of the future economy – at the Q&S Anniversary Gala Dinner yesterday. Today, I would like to share four strategies which SPRING will implement in order to realise the vision.

## **Strategy 1: Focus Q&S Efforts on Emerging Areas**

5. First, our Q&S efforts will focus on emerging areas where new standards are essential, such as in advanced manufacturing and robotics. Our Q&S activities must move upstream to support the innovation process, to ensure alignment between new standards and novel technologies, products and services which are being developed. This will involve engaging innovation clusters, research institutes and various stakeholders in the Q&S value chain.

6. One good example is the Future of Manufacturing (FoM) cluster driven by our economic agencies like Spring Singapore and EDB. Manufacturing in the future will be “smarter”, with the various stages of manufacturing production interconnected and optimised to improve plant- and enterprise-wide efficiency. To enable this, an industrial Internet of Things (IoT) will be needed to lay the foundation for seamless sensor networks and system interfaces between multiple devices and machines. New IoT standards in the area of sensor networks for the manufacturing industry will also be needed to improve interoperability of new smart manufacturing solutions, so that we have the flexibility to adopt modular solutions which can talk to each other and work effectively. Standards will play an important role in synchronising these platforms as well as supporting the mass adoption of robotics across our manufacturing sectors. To support this, SPRING Singapore is working on the development of the Q&S roadmap for the FoM cluster, covering areas ranging from Internet-of-Things (IoT) and nanomaterials, to 3D printing and advanced robotics, all of which are technologies that will materially shape and reshape the manufacturing sector of the future.

7. As we chart the direction of our future economy and industries, the Testing, Inspection and Certification (TIC) sector will need to be even more plugged into the development of these future industries, especially during the research, development and test-bedding phases.

8. To strengthen the TIC eco-system, SPRING has established a TIC Taskforce which comprises TIC companies, trade associations and government agencies. The Taskforce will work with the Singapore Manufacturing Federation to form an industry-led subcommittee in the second half of 2016 to identify industry needs in the area of TIC, and develop services to address these needs.

9. This Taskforce aims to facilitate collaborations between lead agencies and TIC companies to enable the development of new TIC services. It will serve to support emerging growth sectors, specifically in the areas of Smart Healthcare and Smart Transportation.

## **Strategy 2: Leverage Q&S to Support Industry Transformation**

10. Second, Q&S can play a critical role in our industry transformation efforts. For example, the logistics sector requires many standards, ranging from port cargo handling to e-freight, to ensure efficient delivery and transfer of goods. We need a connected and seamlessly connected supply chain system to support the whole range of distributed manufacturing and the new kind of retail activities that we are

seeing. The launch of a world's first standard, TR46 on Last Mile Delivery – eCommerce Data Interchange, is the outcome of a cross-sectoral effort within Singapore. The adoption of this standard will not only improve productivity for the logistics sector, but also the retail sector through smoother fulfilment of eCommerce orders. The standard uses a common dataset and document flow between retailers and logistics service providers, thus eliminating the need for multiple platforms which resulted in inefficiencies across the supply chain. Through the implementation trial of TR46, nine companies have seen integration cost reduced by up to 70% with new businesses; and it has helped to reduce delivery times and errors.

11. Currently TR46 is on trial by various industry players such as eRetailers, eCommerce Platform Providers and Logistic Service Providers both locally and regionally. The feedback gathered from these adopters will help to enhance the existing standard to cater for future international acceptance. It is a very vivid example of how standards, responding to evolution in the industry, can fuel the growth and transformation of these sectors.

### **Strategy 3: Leverage International and Regional Fora**

12. Third, we will deepen our participation in international and regional economic fora to extend the reach of our Q&S network. This is important because whilst we endeavour to work in this domain in Singapore, working in partnership between government agencies, industry and other stakeholders, it is important that we have that international dimension and network because that sustains the connectivity and relevance of the standards. It is imperative that Singapore is plugged into the global Q&S conversation. This will ensure that our industries contribute to the development of new international standards, and meet the requirements as they are launched, so as to gain first mover advantage. The adoption of internationally recognised standards will also help Singapore-based companies enter new markets.

13. Beyond the adoption of international standards, Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) facilitate market access for our companies, as they ensure that products and services tested and certified in Singapore are also accepted in overseas markets. This way, our enterprises can benefit from reduced costs and time-to-market when expanding overseas, and internationalisation is a key thrust of our economic strategy going forward. For instance, in 2015, Singapore signed an inaugural International Accreditation Forum MRA for Food Safety Management System (FSMS). Along with 12 other existing MRAs across various other sectors, it provides our companies with easier access to over 80 economies, including China, India, Indonesia and the United States.

14. In addition, deeper involvement at the leadership level in key international fora such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) will help to advance Singapore's interest in Q&S. Singapore's recent election in June this year as Chair of the Pacific Accreditation Cooperation will also help to promote acceptance of conformity assessments in the region and worldwide. The anchoring of the ISO regional office in Singapore, the first outside of its headquarters in Geneva, will further enable Singapore to deepen engagement with these international bodies and establish thought leadership in the global Q&S dialogue.

#### **Strategy 4: Develop a Q&S-Competent Workforce**

15. Finally, to support these strategies, it is essential for us to have a workforce that is equipped with the expertise and knowledge to use Q&S as a strategic business tool for growth. SPRING's efforts to develop a Q&S competent workforce will dovetail with the national Skills Framework under the SkillsFuture initiative. SPRING will partner stakeholders, including institutes of higher learning and standards development organisations, to incorporate Q&S modules into the skills framework, in support of the industry transformation plans. This will ensure that our workforce has the necessary skills, knowledge and quality mindset to support our companies in establishing and maintaining their quality management systems, as well as meet regulatory and conformity requirements to enhance market access, efficiency and productivity.

#### **Conclusion**

16. Q&S are strategic tools to maintain and enhance the trust in the quality of Singapore's products and services, thereby catalyzing exports and supporting economic development. I would like to thank all the 2,000 Q&S partners once again for your contribution to Q&S development in Singapore. I encourage more industry partners, businesses, consumers and government agencies to come onboard in building a robust Q&S ecosystem for our future economy. We need to raise awareness, strengthen our capability and ensure that our businesses are able to harness Q&S as a key competitive advantage.

17. Thank you.

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