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Speech by Mr Matthias Yao Chih, Minister of State for Defence, at the NTC-1/NTC-2 Approved Training Centre Certificate Presentation Ceremony

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It gives me great pleasure to be present this afternoon to witness the accreditation of Ordnance Engineering Training Institute as an Approved Training Centre for three of its courses. I thank Dr Law Song Seng, Director and CEO of ITE for his effort to make this possible. Also, let me congratulate the Commanding Officer of OETI, MAJ Koh Tat Suan, for his success in leading OETI towards achieving national level accreditation for its courses.

The training institutes in the SAF continually strive to raise the quality and relevancy of their courses within a rapidly changing environment. The training systems are measured against national and international standards. This will ensure that the skill level of our servicemen will meet the stringent operational demands of the SAF.

In 1995, the whole MES formation, including OETI, was awarded the ISO 9002 quality standard. This provided a sound foundation for total quality management in Army maintenance. The accreditation of technical courses conducted by OETI to NTC1, the highest level of technical skills, is yet another milestone achieved by MES formation in its quest for excellence in Army maintenance.

As weapon systems become more sophisticated, the ability to service weapon systems quickly and return them to the battlefield has become an important force multiplier. Technicians play an increasingly critical role in the modern battlefield. Thus, under the WOSE 21 masterplan, the training of the technicians in the Army will be enhanced.

With accreditation to NTC standards, the technicians will also gain marketable qualification, that is, NTC-2 level during the first contract, and NTC-1 during the second contract. This will not only facilitate their advancement and contribution in the Army, but also benefit them in the pursuit of their second career subsequently.

I hope that this accreditation will improve in the recruitment and retention of technicians in the Army. School leavers who wish to pursue an NTC trade certificate can now join the

Army technical scheme directly. Besides being able to contribute as a technician early and enjoy a salary at competitive market rate, they will be able to earn their NTC trade certificates while serving in the Army.

MINDEF will continue to accord the highest priority to the training of our personnel. Today's accreditation of OETI by ITE is definitely a positive step forward. I hope to see more of such affiliation and collaboration with renowned training institutes both locally and abroad so as to meet the national agenda of upgrading the general education and skill level of our scarce manpower resources.

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