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Head of ACCA Singapore

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CEO of International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC)

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to join you today at the ACCA Singapore Awards for Sustainability Reporting 2013, and I would like to thank Ms Leong Soo Yee and the ACCA team for their kind invitation to this event.

2 Today, Singapore is widely recognised as a clean and green city. This is not something that we accomplished overnight but rather, it is the result of many decades worth of meticulous planning and painstaking effort. The blue skies, clear waters and clean land that we enjoy today, are not only a matter of national pride and a standard of living Singaporeans can enjoy, they have also become one very important source of competitive advantage, which has made Singapore a desirable destination for investments, business travellers and tourists. Many businesses from around the world have also chosen to locate their operations on our shores because of this very fact and this has helped create good jobs in Singapore.

3 However, we are facing growing sustainability challenges, as our city gets increasingly developed, lifestyles change, and more resources such as energy and clean water are needed. Externally, the threat of climate change requires us to make even faster adjustments to reduce carbon usage before it is too late. Hence, it is imperative that sustainability remains one of the main pillars of our long-term growth strategy.

4 To promote long-term sustainability, an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Sustainable Development (IMCSD) had been first convened back in 2008 to develop a national framework and key strategies for Singapore's sustainable development. The committee released the Sustainable Singapore Blueprint in 2009 to set out our 2030 targets for sustainable development. One of the key things that the blueprint outlined was that we would have to boost our resource efficiency to make ourselves more sustainable and cost competitive in the long run. It also emphasised the need to build up the capabilities and technologies needed to help spur economic growth while maintaining our sustainable development targets. Later this year, we will start a review of our targets and strategies in the blueprint to ensure that they keep up with changing times.

5 The emphasis we place on the SSB shows that the way we develop Singapore must seek to safeguard our environment while ensuring economic dynamism, and make

Singapore a dense yet sustainable city for the future, one that will continue to turn our constraints into opportunities going forward.

6 Business viability and environmental sustainability are not necessarily at odds with each other but can work together in a virtuous cycle to bring value to one another. Companies which invest in and adopt sustainable practices will reap more consistent cost savings as well as greater public goodwill in the long run, which will ultimately reinforce their long-term viability and success, as many of the companies represented here today can attest to.

7 I would like to commend ACCA for its foresight and relentless pursuit in actively promoting the practice of sustainability reporting among companies. ACCA has been long-time partners with organisations committed to the eco-agenda, including the Singapore Environment Institute and Singapore Compact for CSR. The organisations collaborate on projects to educate corporations, and have spawned efforts such as the ongoing Sustainability Reporting Workshops which ACCA strongly endorses. These workshops help to promote the sustainability agenda amongst the business community in Singapore by providing a nuts and bolts approach to sustainability reporting within organisations, which assists them on a very practical level to start or enhance their own sustainability reporting projects.

8 When the Sustainability Reporting awards first started in 2002, it attracted only three participants. Since then, I am told that this number has grown. Today, we congratulate the 10 companies that have taken part in this award and applaud their commitment to drive the sustainability agenda within their organisations.

9 However, the uptake on sustainability reporting is still not sufficient. A report by ACCA published in March 2010 which surveyed five ASEAN countries found that since 1999, only 21 companies in Singapore have produced sustainability reports or included such information within their annual reports. While this is a significant development, we still lag behind similar business-hubs in Europe and North America in this respect.

10 What we need is a mindset change such that companies would not view sustainability reporting as a liability, but rather as an asset. Companies doing sustainability reporting can realise greater efficiencies for the long run as it compels them to examine areas that had previously been overlooked or ignored. These include business improvements, increased trust and brand reputation, and an assessment of non-financial risk. There is also a positive impact on talent attraction and retention, as a sustainability report has the effect of attracting people whose values resonate with the company's sustainability goals. Being aware that their employer cares about sustainability issues also boosts the morale and productivity of many employees.

11 It is encouraging to note that just a couple of weeks ago, the Straits Times reported that the Singapore Exchange (SGX) was considering setting up a Singapore Sustainability Index to guide investors on the way listed companies approach environmental, social and governance issues, to account for the fact that more investors

were gaining greater awareness on sustainability issues. Such a move could be a clear reflection of the increasing emphasis placed by investors and the private sector at large, on environmental sustainability. Such an index will also be aligned with ACCA's objectives on the sustainability reporting front.

12 As a modern dense tropical city, Singapore is uniquely placed to be a model of sustainable development that balances economic development with a high quality living environment. With government, companies and people sector organisations working together, I am confident that we can write this next chapter of our environmental history together. As one key step in this direction, I urge business leaders to adopt environmental sustainability as a key part of your business considerations. It is not only the right thing to do, but also the right thing for your business too.

13 On that note, I would like to congratulate the winners this afternoon and commend all participants for their dedication to sustainable business practices and sustainability reporting. You are beacons who inspire the rest of your peers. I wish you all a very pleasant afternoon ahead. Thank you.

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