

**Opening Address by Mr Heng Chiang Gnee
Chairman of WSH Council at
the WSH Institute Forum “Safety and health at work – Who owns
it?” on
Thursday, 18 May 2017, 2pm, Ng Teng Fong General Hospital,
Tower A, Level 1 Auditorium**

Fellow WSH Council members, industry leaders and partners,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon and a very warm welcome to all. First I would like to thank you for your participation and support to this year’s WSH Institute Forum titled: “Safety and health at work – Who owns it?” This forum is WSH Institute’s annual public forum that aims to provide a platform for the sharing and exchange of knowledge on emerging WSH issues, so as to spark new ideas and co-create solutions for improving WSH. The focus of today’s forum is timely as it initiates discussion and exchange of ideas into one of the key thrusts identified in the *WSH 2018 Plus Strategy* launched in August 2016, and that is on building collective WSH ownership.

About the WSH 2018 Plus & building collective WSH ownership

2. To realise our vision of a safe and healthy workplace for everyone and a country renowned for best practices in WSH, we need more

concerted efforts from all stakeholders to be on board the WSH improvement journey. The *WSH 2018 Plus Strategy* sets out the plan to bring Singapore back on track to achieve the 2018 target while laying the foundation to address emerging Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) challenges and sustain continuous improvement beyond 2018. To share briefly, the 3 thrusts are, (i) improving WSH performance in the construction industry; (ii) strengthening WSH competency; and (iii) building collective WSH ownership.

3. To elaborate further on the third thrust which is also the anchor for today's forum, sustained WSH improvement can only happen with collective ownership by all, from management down to every worker, so as to foster a progressive and pervasive WSH culture. We need to change our mindset towards one that aims to prevent all work-related injuries and ill-health. We also need to shift our focus from injury compensation to injury prevention and management, and from just safety to holistic management of safety and health, or Total Workplace Safety and Health. These efforts require greater industry leadership and ownership, so as to drive sustained improvements in WSH.

4. I am glad to announce that on this front the WSH Institute had partnered the Nanyang Technological University in a joint research to

understand the individual, cultural and organisational factors in influencing greater ownership of WSH outcomes in Singapore. The project aims to identify the key success factors, propose recommendations and test interventions to inculcate greater ownership of WSH in the industry to advance WSH performance. The project team may approach some of you here to be part of the study in the months ahead, and I hope you can participate actively.

Programme of the Forum

5. This forum will provide you with perspectives on what WSH Ownership is, from both the preliminary research findings and practitioners' standpoint so that we can start to have conversations to deepen our understanding on WSH ownership. We also hope to inspire you to challenge your own interpretation of who owns safety and health in your own workplace and have some thoughts over the difference between 'Responsibility' and 'Ownership'.

6. We are privileged to have with us today distinguished individuals and experts representing the academia, industry, union, and insurance industry to be part of our speaking panel. I am confident that we would all benefit from their experience and thought provoking sharing. I also

encourage you to take this opportunity to take part in the panel discussion later to kick start our discussion on 'what is WSH ownership', and 'who actually owns it at the workplace'.

7. Also as part of the programme, do visit the various exhibition booths on programmes, products and publications by WSH Institute, WSH Council and NTU at the foyer area during tea-break. Do also look out for the booth on the landmark event for WSH in Singapore this year – The World Congress on Safety and Health At Work happening from 3rd to 6th September at Marina Bay Sands. This is one of the largest international WSH event held once every 3 years and Singapore is honoured to host it this round. I believe this will be a good platform to have deeper engagement on WSH Ownership with prominent thought leaders and WSH practitioners. I hope to see you at the World Congress this September.

Concluding Remarks

8. Let me conclude by emphasising that better WSH performance can only be achieved when everyone embraces the same mindset of not just reducing workplace fatalities, but rather to move beyond compliance to prevent ALL work-related injuries and ill-health, and the missing key

ingredient here I believe is ownership. I hope by the end of this forum, we can have a deeper understanding of WSH ownership, and begin to explore further how WSH ownership can be entrenched in every organisation. Lastly, I look forward to your continued support in advancing WSH for Singapore and I wish you a fruitful and inspiring Forum ahead.

Thank you

(~ 800 words – 7-8 mins based on 110 words/min)