

**SPEECH BY MR ZAQY MOHAMAD,
MINISTER OF STATE (MANPOWER AND NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT)
AT THE SCIC'S ANNUAL DINNER 2019 AND
RESPONSIBLE CARE® AWARDS 2018 PRESENTATION
ON 28 MARCH 2019 AT THE REGENT SINGAPORE**

Mr. Wim Roels

Chairman of the Singapore Chemical Industry Council (SCIC),

SCIC Board Members,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen.

A very good evening to all. I am pleased to join you this evening at the Singapore Chemical Industry Council's (SCIC) Annual Dinner and Responsible Care Awards Presentation.

Importance of WSH in the Singapore Chemical Industry

2 The chemical industry is an important pillar of Singapore's economy. The chemicals cluster grew by 4.8% in 2018¹ and in

¹ Economic Survey of Singapore 2018, MTI

terms of chemical exports value, Singapore was ranked 7th globally by the World Trade Organisation in 2017².

3 In the Workplace Safety and Health arena, the chemical industry has performed well, seeing a drop in the number of dangerous occurrences, from 7 cases in 2017 to 2 cases in 2018.

4 However, we have also seen a rise in the number of major injuries in this sector, from 8 cases in 2017 to 14 cases in 2018. Hence, we cannot be complacent. The explosion a week ago at a chemical plant in China is a stark reminder of the catastrophic consequences of any serious incidents in a major hazard installation.

5 The chemical industry must therefore continue to demand and drive a strong sense of commitment towards safety and health.

Jurong Island Vision Zero

6 I am glad that many of you have taken the next step to strengthen workplace safety and health practices within your

² World Trade Statistical Review 2018, WTO

workplace. Last year, several companies on Jurong Island committed to embrace the Vision Zero mind-set and formed the Jurong Island Vision Zero Cluster.

7 This cluster brings together companies that have adopted the mind-set that every workplace injury and ill-health is preventable. These companies are committed to implement pre-emptive measures to ensure a safe and healthy work environment. The cluster facilitates learning from one another's experiences and the sharing of best practices to improve workplace safety and health. Thirty-six companies on Jurong Island have committed to Vision Zero so far, and I urge more companies to come on board soon.

WSH2028: Strategy for the next decade

8 Singapore has shown marked improvements in WSH over the last few years, but we must continue to press on to do better. We must aspire to reduce our workplace fatality rate to less than one per 100,000 employed persons on a sustained basis. So far, only four countries – Germany, the Netherlands, the United

Kingdom, and Sweden – have achieved this with consistency. Achieving this challenging target therefore requires a change in mind-set and strong commitment from stakeholders.

9 Three broad strategies have been identified to guide our efforts towards WSH 2028 outcomes. The first strategy for WSH 2028 revolves around ownership. It is important that everyone in the workplace take ownership of WSH outcomes, from top management to workers at the frontlines, and work towards collaborative efforts in providing WSH solutions and fostering a culture of prevention. Every accident and near-miss has to be taken seriously and learning points cascaded to prevent a recurrence. Such a proactive approach would exemplify what taking ownership of WSH means. In this regard, I applaud your commitment to come together as a community to continuously enhance workplace safety. This is taking ownership of WSH outcomes at an industry level.

10 The second strategy in the WSH2028 is to enhance workplace health. The chemical industry has over the years invested in many control measures to ensure that the work

carried out does not cause illness to your workers. We have also begun to promote workforce health and wellbeing so that they do not lead to accidents at work. I know that many companies here are already implementing some form of workforce health promotion in your workplace. This is part of the Responsible Care Programme³ and it is the right thing to do. Healthier workers also tend to be happier and more productive at work. I would like to encourage companies who have yet to do so to embark on it.

11 Workers with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol are at a higher risk of suffering from a heart attack or stroke. Such conditions, if not managed properly, could also lead to dizzy or fainting spells, which would be a great concern for workers in safety critical jobs. It is in the

³ Responsible Care® is the chemical industry's voluntary initiative globally to continuously improve its health, safety and environmental standards. Singapore adopted Responsible Care® in 1990, which is built around a set of 10 Guiding Principles that commit the chemical industry to the responsible management of chemicals. The 10 Guiding Principles are translated into 6 Codes of Management Practices: 1) product stewardship, process safety, 3) employee health and survey, 4) distribution, 5) community awareness & emergency response, 6) pollution prevention.

Signatory companies would be required to complete and submit their set of Responsible Care® Annual Self-Assessment. Responsible Care Awards was launched in 2001 by SCIC to recognise the efforts of companies which have committed to practice and implement the 6 Responsible Care Codes of Management Practices.

interest of employers, including those in the chemical industry, to focus on workplace health in order to improve workplace safety.

12 The third strategy in WSH2028 encourages companies to embrace the use of technology to reduce WSH risks. Technology can not only help businesses to enhance productivity and business outcomes, it can also improve workplace safety and health. The chemical industry is again well placed to tap on the immense opportunity and improvements that technology brings about. Some examples seen on Jurong Island include the use of driverless trucks for transportation of polymer products between the packaging and intermediate storage area within the facility and deployment of analytical and sensing technologies to improve workplace safety, reliability and productivity. Advanced sensors linked to operators' tablets are also used to monitor field equipment, while RFID technology is used to track locations of employees and contractors during a drill or an emergency.

13 With the help of technology, workers can be freed up to carry out other higher value-added work and to give more attention to safety-critical tasks. It is therefore important for companies in the chemical industry to embrace the use of technology for better productivity and a safer workplace.

14 MOM is finalising the WSH2028 national strategies and will announce the details in April 2019.

Responsible Care Awards

15 This evening, we come together to honour the recipients of 103 Responsible Care awards. I would like extend my heartiest congratulations to all award winners. It is a fitting recognition of your commitment to improve health, safety and environmental standards through the implementation of best practices at the workplace.

16 Among the award recipients tonight are ExxonMobil Chemical Asia Pacific, Petrochemical Corporation of Singapore (PCS) and Shell Chemicals, who are receiving the Leadership Award. The winner of the Leadership Award must have

consistently attained the Excellence Award for at least three consecutive years. PCS has been the only recipient of the Leadership Award since its introduction in 2014, and I am heartened that ExxonMobil Chemical and Shell Chemicals, have joined PCS in achieving the Leadership Award this year. This achievement has been made possible through their strong safety ownership and allocation of resources to ensure that operations are carried out safely, and in an environmentally-responsible manner. They serve as role models for other companies in the chemical industry.

Closing Remarks

17 In closing, I would like to commend SCIC for playing a prominent and proactive role in working with the chemical industry to drive WSH improvements. I urge the chemical industry to continue with your good efforts to create a safe and healthy environment for everyone.

18 Once again, congratulations to all award winners and I wish you a pleasant evening.

Thank you.