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STATE COURTS WORKPLAN 2016:
“Charting the Future Together”

Keynote Address by
The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon

Fellow judges, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

INTRODUCTION

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the State Courts’ Workplan 2016 and to deliver this keynote address.

2. The theme for this year’s Workplan is “Charting the Future Together”. Inherent in this are two key notions. The first relates to the importance of planning for our future. The second emphasizes the collective process by which we should undertake this endeavour.

3. Let me start with the first notion, which is encapsulated within the phrase “Charting the Future”. In a speech I delivered at the Australian Supreme and Federal Court Judges Conference in January this year, I observed that organisations which fail to adjust to new paradigms tend over time to face existential threats. Judiciaries will not be spared from this reality. The courts cannot just carry on with their business as usual ignoring the changing realities that affect them. We must therefore guard against

becoming transfixed with past and present ways of doing things, lest we miss the future¹.

4. We celebrated our 50th birthday as a nation last year. It was a time for celebration; but also for reflection. We had cause for celebration in large part because our founding fathers had the courage to dream and the discipline to plan. If we wish to pass on a worthwhile legacy to those who will come after us, then it is incumbent upon us to imagine an even better future and to plan ahead and make a reality of it.

5. To plan wisely for our future, we must ensure that we understand the increasingly complex, uncertain and changing contexts in which we operate. Organisational psychologist Karl Weick describes this process as “sensemaking”, and it has been said that this involves not just analysis but creativity². For the courts, this would entail being keenly attuned to the changes in the profile of the disputes that come before the courts, the demographics and expectations of our court users, as well as other financial, social, technological and environmental factors that may impact the way we go about dispensing justice. Only by being sensitive to such trends can we better discern the shape of tomorrow, and so be able to plan and act in time for when it comes.

¹ Sundaresh Menon, *The Future of Commercial Litigation: How Not to Fall Off the Edge of a Flat World* (7 February 2016) at ¶64.

² See Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski and Senge, *In praise of the Incomplete Leader*, Harvard Business Review (February 2007 issue).

6. Let me also touch briefly on the second notion in the Workplan theme - that of “Charting our Future *Together*”. The word “together” is a salutary reminder that the fulfilment of the courts’ mission in dispensing effective and accessible justice cannot be accomplished by us in isolation. Instead, it will require the concerted effort and commitment of our judges and staff, as well as the support and cooperation of all our stakeholders.

7. In charting our future, we should therefore deepen our collaborative relationships with our justice stakeholders. Only in this way, will our prospects of achieving optimal outcomes for our court users be maximised.

RECAP OF 2015 INITIATIVES

8. It is fair to say that we have been planning ahead for many years and we continue to build on all that has already been accomplished. It is fitting therefore to begin this Address by providing an update on several key initiatives implemented by the State Courts in the course of last year. These include the following:

- (a) Launch of the State Courts Centre for Dispute Resolution.
 - (i) On 4 March 2015, we launched the State Courts Centre for Dispute Resolution (SCCDR). The establishment of the SCCDR marks a major milestone for the State Courts. It signals our commitment to promote Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) as a key dispute resolution option. The SCCDR now serves as a

dedicated ADR centre, providing ADR services for the whole range of disputes originating from the different Justice Divisions within the State Courts. The SCCDR also plays a vital role in coordinating our collaborative efforts with external ADR stakeholders in the areas of ADR development, training and research.

(b) Establishment of the Community Justice and Tribunals Division

- (i) On 24 April 2015, the newest justice division of the State Courts, the Community Justice and Tribunals Division (CJTD), was established. The CJTD was set up to provide a centralised location for the resolution of all community justice issues. Such cases are now handled by judges and court administrators with specific experience and expertise in these areas. This has allowed community disputes to be dealt with more effectively and expediently. The CJTD currently also oversees the Small Claims Tribunals (SCT), the Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals (CDRT), as well as cases under the Protection from Harassment Act (POHA).

(c) Expansion of Legal Assistance to Accused Persons

- (i) Third, there were several important developments in the effort to enhance access to justice for accused persons. First amongst these, the Enhanced Guidance for Plea Scheme (EGPS) was

launched in February 2015. The EGPS broadens the reach of the existing Guidance for Plea scheme to include certain categories of cases at both the mentions and PTC stages. In the main, these are cases involving accused persons who are in remand, who face multiple charges, have possible mental or psychiatric issues, and who will likely face an imprisonment term upon conviction. The results of these efforts have been encouraging. 91 cases were managed under the scheme last year, with the coordination and assistance of the Community Justice Centre (CJC).

- (ii) Separately, the enhanced Criminal Legal Aid Scheme (CLAS) scheme was launched by the Minister for Law, Mr K Shanmugam in May last year. Under the enhanced scheme, more accused persons will be able to benefit from legal aid provided by members of the Bar. As at 31 December 2015, there had been 2,299 applications for aid, of which 1,425 had been approved. We will continue to strongly support the efforts of the Bar and of the CLAS.

- (iii) The State Courts also worked with the Law Society and the CJC to extend the Primary Justice Project (PJP), which previously had only been utilized for civil and family matters, to accused persons who might not have qualified for CLAS assistance on account of not meeting the means test. The PJP was launched on a pilot

basis for two important plea bargaining processes - the Criminal Case Management Scheme (CCMS) and the Criminal Case Resolution (CCR) Scheme - on 1 December 2015. Under this pilot scheme, qualifying accused persons will be able to receive basic legal services at a reduced fee in CCMS and/or CCR proceedings.

(d) International Conference on Court Excellence

- (i) Lastly, let me highlight the International Conference on Court Excellence which was successfully hosted by the State Courts in January this year. The Conference, with the theme “Judiciary of the Future”, was extremely well received, attracting about 190 participants from 18 countries. A distinguished array of speakers presented at the conference on a wide range of topics concerning various aspects of court excellence and court innovation. I congratulate the organising committee for their commendable efforts in organizing this noteworthy conference.

WORKPLAN 2016

9. Building on the successful year that is now behind us, let me turn to this year. The key imperative remains that we must continually evolve to meet the changing needs of society and of our users, and to ensure that litigants have access to meaningful and effective justice. In preparing for this Workplan, we have kept this at the forefront of our deliberations and

proceeded to critically examine the existing processes that we have in order to assess what more we can do to improve the delivery of our services.

10. Several key initiatives have emerged from this exercise and they revolve around these four broad ideas:

- A. First, the Expansion of the State Courts' Core Work;
- B. Second, Enhancing Effectiveness in the Administration of Justice;
- C. Third, Enhancing Accessibility and Public Understanding of Our Court Processes; and
- D. Finally, Leveraging on Information Technology (IT).

A. EXPANSION OF THE STATE COURTS' CORE WORK

Changes to the State Courts' Civil Jurisdiction

11. As socio-economic conditions and the public's needs change, so too must the way we do our work. In this regard, the types of work that may suitably be handled by the State Courts can be expected to evolve over time.

12. I mentioned in my Response at this year's Opening of the Legal Year that the State Courts are undertaking a review of the District Court's civil jurisdiction. This exercise was driven by the fact that it has been some 18 years since the civil jurisdictional limit of the District Courts was revised to its current level of \$250,000 in 1997.

13. A further impetus for this review is the growing trend in recent years of higher value claims in particular areas being heard in the State Courts, either upon transfer from the Supreme Court, or by consensual enhancement of the jurisdiction of the State Courts under Section 23 of the State Courts Act. This has been most notable in the area of personal injury litigation. This suggests that parties are prepared to have the State Courts adjudicate claims of a higher value and it signifies the strong trust and confidence reposed in these Courts.

14. I have considered the State Courts' recommendations and agree in principle that the time is right for the District Court's monetary jurisdiction to be enhanced. The operational and resource requirements of implementing this change are currently being looked into, and we expect to implement them in early 2017. I have also suggested to the Presiding Judge and his team that this be done in a phased way so that the jurisdictional limit is raised to a suitable level in the field of personal injury and property damage litigation to begin with. This would extend to all claims for personal injuries and property damage arising from motor accidents, and personal injuries

arising from industrial accidents. Adopting such a phased approach will enable us to progress in a measured way. I should also make it clear that no changes are contemplated at this time to the Magistrate's Court's jurisdictional limit. This is because of the still quite recent introduction of simplified processes applying to such claims under Order 108 of the Rules of Court.

Establishment of the Employment Claims Tribunal under CJTD

15. A further significant development in the core work undertaken by the State Courts will take place in the coming year when the Employment Claims Tribunal (ECT) is established within the Community Justice and Tribunals Division (CJTD).

16. This development follows the Ministry of Manpower's (MOM) announcement of its intention to establish the ECT. The legislation pertaining to this is currently subject to public consultation and it is therefore possible that the final shape of the law may change as a result of that. But subject to this, I can give some tentative indications of the thinking behind the ECT. It is contemplated that once established, the ECT will adjudicate salary-related claims between employers and employees arising both under statute and under contract, subject to a jurisdictional limit of \$20,000. Notably, employees who are outside the ambit of the Employment Act, such as professionals, managers and executives (PMEs)

earning above \$4,500 monthly, may nonetheless use the ECT if their claims fall within the prescribed jurisdictional limit.

17. The overarching aim of the ECT is to provide an expeditious and affordable forum for all employees to resolve salary-related disputes with their employers. The ECT will accomplish this by adjudicating disputes in a tribunal setting, employing an adjudicatory framework with simplified processes.
18. Amicable resolution will continue to be emphasized. Parties will be required to undergo mediation before a claim may be filed in the ECT. And accompanying this, processes will be put in place to allow for agreements that are voluntarily reached between the parties to be registered as court orders.
19. The State Courts and MOM will continue working together on the operational details pertaining to the ECT. We expect the ECT will further augment the important role played by the CJTD in providing a speedy and inexpensive forum for the resolution of disputes, thereby ensuring meaningful access to justice for all our people.

B. ENHANCING EFFECTIVENESS IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

20. I move to the second area of emphasis which will guide the State Courts' initiatives in the coming year, namely that of Enhancing Effectiveness in the Administration of Justice.
21. As we strive to dispense effective justice for our court users, our court processes cannot remain static. Processes which have served us well in the past may have lost part of their relevance or effectiveness, and this may stem from changed societal conditions, or changes in the types of cases and profile of court users who come before us.
22. The State Courts have therefore invested significant efforts over the years to innovate court processes. These include promoting Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) as a core dispute resolution strategy, as well as the simplification of our civil process for claims within the Magistrate's Court limit, and the establishment of the Progress Accountability Court, just to mention a few.
23. We will continue to build upon these foundations in the coming year by rolling out some new initiatives.

Pre-sentence Protocol and Collaboration with SACA

24. First, the State Courts will adopt a new sentencing approach that will seek to address particular problems that underlie certain kinds of offending behaviour in a particular segment of cases.

25. This is not as obscure a goal as might at first be thought and it is intended to apply to a limited range of minor offences. Let me explain with some elaboration. A fair proportion of petty thefts, public order offences, and minor offences involving petty violence and threats frequently arise from alcohol or other addictions. Where the underlying addictions or behavioural issues are not specifically addressed, they tend to persist and result in recurrent offending despite repeated prosecution, court convictions and even imprisonment terms. For such repeat offenders who find themselves locked in a cycle of reoffending, another term of imprisonment in and of itself may not hold the key to break this sad cycle.
26. Instead, it might be more productive to divert efforts towards helping such offenders to first gain sufficient insight into the underlying issues, after which they might be ready to commit themselves to a better future. At the same time, probation orders and community-based sentencing options may not be appropriate or available either because of the offender's prior antecedents or the nature of the charge.
27. For such offenders, the Community Courts will consider adopting a new protocol. Instead of passing sentence immediately, directions may be made for such offenders to undergo treatment, receive counselling, take medication, and/or voluntarily undergo residential or structured programmes offered by voluntary welfare organisations to encourage them

to actually address and resolve the underlying issue that is at the root of their problems. The Courts will monitor compliance with the directions, typically over a period of up to 6 months.

28. As a start, the Singapore After-Care Association (SACA) has agreed to collaborate with the State Courts on this initiative. SACA is a key after-care agency, affiliated with the National Council of Social Service, which seeks to empower ex-offenders to take ownership of their own transformational journeys and to facilitate their reintegration into society. SACA will assist the courts by providing case management services for offenders coming within this scheme. Such services could include the provision of counselling services, befriending and pro-social support, monitoring the offender's compliance with court directions (such as curfew and attendance at court-ordered treatment programs), liaising with the offender's employer and family, and updating and reporting to the court on the offender's progress. In due course, other volunteer organisations may be engaged by the State Courts for these purposes.

29. At the end of the defined pre-sentence period, the Court will then take into consideration the offender's progress made in addressing the underlying problems in the intervening period of time before finalising its decision on sentencing. A conditional discharge requiring that the offender stays crime-free for, say, another 12 months could be one outcome of these efforts.

30. In appropriate cases, the Courts might also impose post-sentence monitoring so as to ensure that offenders stay focused on dealing with the issues underlying their offending behaviour. In such cases, the offender will also be subjected to the oversight and scrutiny of the Progress Accountability Court.

Scheme for Assistance of Counsellors at SCCDR Mediation Sessions

31. In the area of ADR, we will enhance our court ADR Services to meet the needs of an increasingly prominent and prevalent segment of court users.
32. We have noted a discernible increase in cases coming for mediation before the SCCDR which are complex because they involve deep underlying relational disputes. In these cases, the court dispute is the culmination of years of hurt, resentment and severely strained relations between persons who live or work in close proximity to one another.
33. To better mediate such cases, the SCCDR will introduce a scheme in which a trained counsellor or psychologist will be present at the mediation session for selected cases. The goal is for the counsellor or psychologist to assist the parties to identify and address the entrenched emotional conflicts that are manifested in the Court proceedings. This will improve the prospects of a more fruitful mediation and ultimately a resolution of the issues before the court, and the achievement of a more holistic and satisfactory solution for all involved.

Executive Programme for Court and Tribunal Administrators

34. Let me turn to a separate aspect of improving the effectiveness of the administration of justice. This pertains to the training of our staff. In our quest for court excellence, we need to ensure that that our court staff are equipped with the relevant skill sets to undertake and perform their duties to the best of their abilities.

35. Our court and tribunal administrators play a critical role in the daily operations of the courts. To enhance their professionalism, the State Courts will collaborate with an established and reputable local tertiary institution to develop an executive programme for Court and Tribunal Administrators.

36. This Executive Programme is aimed at high-performing court and tribunal administrators in Singapore and the region who already hold or have the potential to hold leadership positions in court administration. It will also be relevant for public sector officers who are involved in the management of quasi-judicial bodies or those involved in related policy and planning work. As with other high-level leadership programmes, ours will incorporate multi-disciplinary elements encompassing areas such as leadership, process innovation, finance management, public communications, data analytics, values and ethics to equip the participants with critical leadership and management capabilities.

37. With its implementation, we also hope to position Singapore as a regional learning hub for achieving excellence in judicial administration.

C. ENHANCING ACCESSIBILITY AND PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING OF OUR COURT PROCESSES

38. I turn to the third area of emphasis for our Workplan this year and this concerns enhancing accessibility to our court system and improving the public's understanding of our court processes.

39. It is plain to see that access to justice cannot be achieved if our users feel alienated or intimidated by the court system. Inadequacy of information and complexity of court processes, in particular, have long been identified as key impediments to access to justice.

40. These are not new concerns. Over the years, we have consistently strived to improve accessibility to the court system in particular by providing support for unrepresented litigants and enhancing the public's understanding of our court processes.

41. I am delighted to note that the State Courts' ongoing efforts in this regard have been well recognised. In the latest bi-annual Court-Users Survey conducted in the last quarter of 2015, the respondents surveyed, which comprised a wide cross-section of our users, including lawyers, Deputy

Public Prosecutors (DPPs), and other court users, have indicated very high satisfaction levels with the quality of our court services. The overall confidence levels in the State Courts showed a significant improvement, from the already high 92% in 2013 to 96% in 2015.

42. And an average of 97% of the court users surveyed also gave favourable ratings under each of the 4 State Courts' core attributes namely: (a) Fairness, (b) Accessibility, (c) Independence, Integrity, and Impartiality, and (d) Responsiveness.

43. These results are a resounding affirmation of the deep commitment of these Courts to achieve service excellence and to ensure access to meaningful justice. In the coming year, the State Courts will continue to build on these strong foundations and further improve accessibility. The following initiatives have been developed with this goal in mind.

State Courts Student Representatives Programme

44. First, to further address the problem of lack of familiarity with the law and court processes faced by unrepresented litigants, the CJTD will soon launch a new "Student Representatives Programme". This is designed to provide assistance to qualifying litigants-in-person in harassment cases, community disputes and small claims cases. Student Representatives who participate in this scheme will perform the important role of providing practical support and guidance to litigants in terms of navigating and

adhering to court processes. They will be provided with appropriate training, and be closely supervised to enable them to perform this task effectively.

45. In line with the collaborative spirit of this venture, we also will seek to expose participating students to a wide range of cases that affect the majority of users who come before these tribunals. They will thus have valuable opportunities to experience and participate in real-life legal scenarios through their interactions with litigants-in-person, judges and experienced court administrators. Altogether, this should result in a more holistic legal education for the students who choose to participate in this programme.

SCT Interactive online self-assessment tool

46. Digital technology gives us a valuable means of enhancing access to justice. The public is increasingly looking to online tools and sources of information to familiarise themselves with the applicable law and processes involved. Improvements in this area can therefore have quite profound effects.
47. For instance, litigants pursuing small value claims will look to the Small Claims Tribunals (SCT). But claimants must first ascertain whether their claims fall within the SCT's jurisdiction. This may not always be a straightforward task, especially for lay litigants.

48. To provide assistance to these users, we are developing an interactive online self-assessment tool. This will guide users as they assess their eligibility to file their claims with the SCT through a short and simple questionnaire. The self-assessment tool will provide brief explanations and suggest alternatives to those whose claims are assessed to be ineligible for the SCT. Where the claim is assessed to be eligible, the self-assessment tool will then guide the user to fill up a claim form through a second round of questions.
49. The SCT online self-assessment tool will be the first of its kind to be used in our Courts. We expect to pilot it in the 3rd quarter of 2016. Drawing upon the lessons learnt from this pilot programme, we may then develop similar online self-assessment tools for other court processes to assist our users.

SCT Information tool kits

50. For cases that may be heard before the SCT, we also intend to develop and provide informational tool kits to assist users in understanding the basic legal principles that may be relevant to their claims or defences.
51. As parties to a SCT claim are self-represented, their lack of familiarity with the law that pertains to their causes of action can give rise to unrealistic expectations of the strengths of their claim(s) or defence(s) (as the case

may be). One consequence is that cases become drawn out when they could and should be settled at an earlier stage.

52. The self-help tool kits will help correct possible misconceptions the parties might have on the law and so help them arrive at a more realistic assessment of their cases, thus improving the prospects of an amicable settlement.

53. The SCT is now working on the first tool kit involving common claims arising from tenancy disputes. It will contain an introduction to the basic elements of the cause of action, highlight the usual documents that should be included, set out a list of pertinent issues that the parties should consider and use a series of questions to guide the parties in assessing their legal positions. We hope to expand this over time to include all common types of claims that are before the SCT.

Publications

54. Publications have always been a good way to promote self-help among our court users, and to assist them in understanding legal issues and our processes. The State Courts will continue to develop some further publications in the coming year.

Third Edition of Book on Assessment of Damages

55. First, a team from these Courts is working with LexisNexis on the third edition of the book entitled “Assessment of Damages: Personal Injuries and Fatal Accidents”. First published in 2001, the book contains a comprehensive review of the damages awarded for different types of personal injury claims and death-related claims, based on a survey of the reported and unreported decisions from all tiers of our courts.

56. Since the publication of the second edition of the book more than 10 years ago, there have been many developments in the relevant case law in this area. Several judges from the State Courts have already started work to bring the book up to date. Practitioners can expect a 3rd edition of the Book by the first quarter next year.

Electronic Version of the Motor Accident Guide

57. Members of the Bar and public can also look forward to the publication of the electronic version of the Motor Accident Guide later this year. The 1st edition of the Motor Accident Guide was published and launched in 2014, and has enjoyed very good reviews. With the electronic version, readers will be able to refer to the book wherever they may be, and using their mobile devices, they will also be able to perform search functions.

World Bank Book

58. Lastly, a joint publication showcasing the State Courts' journey in achieving court excellence is in the pipeline.

59. Some of you may be familiar with the book entitled "Judiciary-led Reforms in Singapore: Framework, Strategies and Lessons". That was published by the World Bank in 2007, in collaboration with the Supreme Court and the Subordinate Courts as they were then known and it focused on the reforms undertaken by the judiciary in the 15 or so years from the early 1990s.

60. In the coming year, the World Bank and the State Courts will collaborate on a new publication. Its main objective will be to distil the principles that have guided our journey towards organisational excellence. These will be illustrated with examples of the initiatives that we have introduced over the years. Through his publication, we hope to engender a better understanding of the work of the State Courts, both domestically and internationally.

D. LEVERAGING ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)

61. I come to the final area of focus which will underpin some of the State Courts initiatives in 2016, namely leveraging on Information Technology (IT).

62. With the exponential growth in the power of IT, sweeping changes have taken place in the way justice is administered. This has been most profoundly felt in the area of case management. The successive and successful roll-outs of the eLitigation system (eLit), the Regulatory Offences Case Management System (ROMS), and the Integrated Criminal Case Filing and Management System (ICMS) all attest to this.
63. ICMS is our most recent IT enhancement and it was launched in February last year. It is one of the most important IT projects that we have launched in recent years. The State Courts were conferred 3 local and international awards in the past year for its work on the ICMS, namely, the FutureGov Singapore Awards in the 'eGovernment' category; the Singapore Infocomm Technology Federation for the 'Best Innovative Use of Infocomm Technology Awards in the Public Sector'; and the Asia Pacific ICT Alliance (APICTA) - Merit Award conferred at a ceremony in Colombo, Sri Lanka. These awards bear witness to the transformational impact that we expect ICMS will have on criminal case management. The State Courts will embark on phase 2 of ICMS to expand its functionalities and further refine and enhance its capabilities. A key focus will be to work on allowing unrepresented accused persons to access their electronic case files and submit and file applications online. Work will also commence on developing "ICMS Lite", a mobile-friendly version enabling key ICMS functions and features to be accessed on the go.

64. Aside from this, there are further plans to implement other IT-related initiatives to improve the administration of justice in the coming year.

The Community Justice and Tribunals System

65. First, the State Courts will soon commence working on another large-scale IT system for the Community Justice and Tribunals Division (CJTD). A new Community Justice and Tribunals System (CJTS) is currently being developed to consolidate intake and case management for all cases under the Small Claims Tribunals (SCT), the Community Disputes Resolution Tribunals (CDRT) and the Employment Claims Tribunal (ECT).
66. There are also plans to develop a new application within the CJTS incorporating online-dispute resolution (ODR) processes for small claims. The aim is to provide a safe and neutral platform for parties involved in small claims disputes to negotiate their differences using online conciliation procedures as early as possible, before the case even proceeds to the SCT. We will develop this and release further details in due course.

Automated Collection System (ACS)

67. Another IT initiative which court users can expect shortly is the full roll out of the Automated Collection System (ACS).
68. I mentioned this at last year's Workplan when I said that there are plans to introduce an automated collection system to allow court users to pay court

finer, fees and bail amounts using multiple and varied payment modes. I am pleased to report that the first ACS kiosk has been delivered for set-up and I am told will be deployed once it has been tested and commissioned.

69. The ACS will generate significant efficiencies in the collection of court payments, and bring about a new way of interacting with our users. It comes with a touch-screen display and allows court users to make payments using a variety of payment methods, including cash, cashier's order, cheque, credit and debit cards, and NETS. When making payment, court users may retrieve their records by scanning the QR codes on the payment advice or keying in their identification number or case number. Acknowledgment slips can also be generated.

70. More ACS kiosks will be installed at various locations within the State Courts' premises progressively, as we monitor the level of usage as well as any feedback we receive from our users.

Justice@StateCourts Mobile App

71. As mobile devices have become ubiquitous, the public today relies to a growing degree on mobile Apps to access relevant information.

72. To meet this growing trend, we launched the first phase of the State Courts' mobile application known as "mHearing" in April 2015. The "mHearing" app was designed to run on mobile devices such as

smartphones and tablets. The earlier mobile application displayed hearing lists for PTC cases for the coming week.

73. The “mHearing” application was relaunched as Justice@StateCourts last month. It is available for download through the App Store and Google Play and has been enhanced to include more informational services such as filing instructions, operating hours and directions, virtual tours of the courtrooms and information on access to legal aid services. In addition, the hearing lists have been extended to also display criminal and civil trials, as well as tribunal hearings. *[Interlude: screening of mHearing app video: approximately 49 s.]*

74. We will continue to explore the viability of incorporating further enhancements to the “Justice@StateCourts Mobile” app. Over time, it may include other modules that court users may find useful, such as booking tours of the State Courts and providing near real-time information of the queue status at the registries. In the longer term, we hope to have a comprehensive list of services on the “Justice@StateCourts Mobile” app.

Videos to help litigants and accused in person

75. Finally, the State Courts will work on producing a series of information videos to assist unrepresented litigants. For a start, a video on the Criminal Case Disclosure Conference (CCDC) process will be produced shortly. This will be made available in our four main languages, and will be played

to unrepresented accused persons while they await their Pre-Trial Conference sessions. The video will also be uploaded onto the State Courts' website.

76. The CCDC process is currently explained to accused persons by judges, court administrators and/or interpreters. When implemented, the videos will complement these face-to-face explanations. It is hoped that with animation and graphic illustrations, the understanding of the CCDC process will be significantly enhanced.

CONCLUSION

77. I earlier noted the inclusion of the word "together" in this year's Workplan theme, "Charting the Future Together", reflects the importance of collaborative efforts in our continual quest to improve access to justice and uphold the rule of law. I would therefore like to close this address by taking this opportunity to express my appreciation to the individuals, agencies and institutions that have assisted the State Courts in the various initiatives we have launched over the years, and also to those who will be collaborating with us in our new initiatives in the coming year.
78. In particular, let me acknowledge the various ministries, organisations and also members of the Advisory Panel for the New State Courts Towers, all of whom have provided great support to us. Turning to the new Towers, the foundation work is continuing apace and will be completed very shortly.

The tender for the main construction of the new towers has also been awarded. There is a great deal of work to do and I look forward to the continued support of all our partners in the coming months and years as we strive to bring this important project to a successful completion.

79. The State Courts have consistently delivered on our Workplans and I have every confidence that we will do so again under the leadership of the Presiding Judge and the management team, and with the commitment and dedication of each and every one of you who dedicate yourselves to dispensing justice in these Courts.

80. I wish the judges and court administrators of the State Courts all the best in fulfilling this year's Workplan.