



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joint Media Release

***Business sans Borders* achieves successful proof-of-concept to enhance SME access to trade opportunities**

Singapore, 11 November 2019... The Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) and Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) today announced the successful completion of its Business sans Borders (BSB) Phase One Proof-of-Concept¹ (POC). MAS and IMDA will proceed with the Phase Two Pilot of the BSB in 1H 2020.

2 BSB is a “meta-hub” or connector of several SME-centric platforms. By connecting these different platforms, BSB helps SMEs seamlessly access a much larger ecosystem of buyers, sellers, logistics service providers, financing, and digital solution providers. BSB utilises artificial intelligence (AI) to enable SMEs to discover prices and sales opportunities in a larger global marketplace, access various supply chains, and easily source for and utilise relevant digital and financial solutions.

3 The 9-month POC, performed in collaboration with private sector partners - GlobalLinker, Mastercard, PwC, SAP and Yellow Pages - demonstrated the technical and business feasibility of the BSB concept. It used anonymised and synthetic² data from the participating platforms. SMEs were matched with potential services providers (e.g. in finance and logistics) to purchase value-added services from the BSB Digital Store³. The POC also comprised a sandbox innovation space to identify business problem statements, facilitate access to trade data and inclusion of new services for SMEs. Please refer to Annex A for more information about BSB. The first external platform to connect to the BSB Phase One POC system is a key Philippines platform from Union Bank of Philippines and its FinTech subsidiary UBX. Please see further details in Annex B.

BSB Phase Two Pilot

4 Building on the successful Phase One POC, MAS and IMDA will move forward with the Phase Two Pilot of the BSB. This will be trialed with real SME transactions on participating

¹ See the MAS-IMDA media release, “Business sans Borders – A collaborative AI-driven global solutions hub to foster SME digitalisation” at this link: <https://www.mas.gov.sg/news/media-releases/2018/business-sans-borders>

² A mix of real and simulated data was used.

³ The BSB digital store is a repository of essential SME-centric services needed by an SME to facilitate seamless trade, such as financing and logistics.

platforms starting with those based in Singapore, the Philippines, and India. An example of what we hope to achieve in Phase Two Pilot is to enable a machine parts seller in Singapore to offer his products to buyers domestically and internationally, as well as be matched with financial, logistics and business service providers through the participating platforms. As part of Phase Two, the Singapore Government will explore piloting some procurement via BSB and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas will join BSB as a Founding Member, collaborating on areas such as domestic and cross-border financial sector issues.

5 Phase Two of the BSB will be open to participants such as trade bodies, business-to-business and business-to-consumer platforms, solution providers/FinTechs, SMEs and government agencies.

6 Ms Jacqueline Loh, Deputy Managing Director, MAS said, “BSB seeks to re-imagine the integration of business and financial services, such as SME financing and digitalisation. While this initiative started locally, we are heartened by the strong interest from various parties overseas including trade bodies, SMEs and governments. We look forward to greater local and international collaboration to help realise the full potential of BSB.”

7 “We are encouraged to see more governments joining BSB, and look forward to continuingly work closely with MAS and industry partners to help SMEs everywhere innovate and connect in a Digital Economy. As BSB continues to grow and bridge e-commerce, government, financing and logistics platforms together, we will further break down barriers to enable SMEs to transform, grow and trade seamlessly across the region and beyond,” said Mr Tan Kiat How, Chief Executive Officer, IMDA.

8 **Benjamin E. Diokno, Governor, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP)**, said, “The Business sans Borders initiative opens the gates for greater opportunities for SMEs to sell products across borders in a seamless manner. The BSP supports the BSB initiative as it complements our financial inclusion agenda through the national retail payment system, the InstaPay, PESONet, and QR Code, while harnessing the benefits of financial technology (FinTech) for our SMEs and other stakeholders. This is also in line with our mission to bring central banking closer to the people.”

9 **Sameer Vakil Co-founder & CEO, GlobalLinker**, said, “GlobalLinker is committed to making the business growth of SMEs simpler, more profitable and enjoyable! In this endeavour, it is pleased to be a founding partner of Business sans Borders, as this capability will help serve GlobalLinker member interests even better. We are excited about the progress we have made to date on BSB and the commitment of all the founding members, ably channelised by MAS & IMDA, has been very high. Phase 2, will provide us early results, directly from the businesses we seek to serve. We will carefully gauge the usage of the solution and observe SME experiences, so we may learn and improve the solution & experience further.”

10 “With Singapore’s successful completion of the Proof-of-Concept (POC), Mastercard believes that BSB will be the catalytic force that enables SMEs across Asia – including India and key ASEAN countries – to flex and scale seamlessly on the global stage. This digital platform empowers SMEs with transformative access to commercial partnerships and business opportunities that can fuel their growth and cross-border trade. Mastercard also

remains committed to partnering with the Singapore government to help meet its national digital objectives, as well as design the secure payment infrastructure to underpin them,” said **Ari Sarker, Co-President, Asia Pacific Mastercard.**

11 **Yeoh Oon Jin, Singapore Executive Chairman, PwC,** said, “Digitalising the SME sector to work smarter in order to successfully expand beyond current borders is key to the foundation of a smart region. The BSB proof of concept already shows great promise of a tremendous upside to countries and regions which strive to connect SMEs beyond their borders, leading to job growth, innovation and overall higher share of GDP being generated by the SME sector. This endeavour is a great example of how PwC works together with businesses and governments to create sustainable future growth, and bring our purpose of building trust in society and solving important problems to life.”

12 **Scott Russell, President, SAP Asia Pacific Japan,** said, “SMEs are the MNCs of tomorrow and will lead the next era of growth for Asia. Through the Proof-of-Concept for BSB with MAS and IMDA, we demonstrated how SAP’s best-in-class technology and solutions will support SMEs to participate in the digital economy and drive broader financial inclusion for all. At SAP, we aim to accelerate the hypergrowth of SMEs and collaborate with governments to build intelligent nations for a sustainable future.”

13 **Ng Tiong Gee, Chairman, Yellow Pages,** said, “SMEs are the bedrock of our economy. For more than 50 years, Yellow Pages Singapore has been a trusted partner of our local SMEs. BSB presents an unprecedented opportunity for them to expand their horizon. With our platform and our deep understanding of our clients and technology, we want to help them take advantage of the BSB initiative to be part of the global ecosystem”.

14 **Praveen Khandelwal, National Secretary General, Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT),** said, "Participation in Business sans Borders will help CAIT SME Traders tremendously. We are in the process of digitising our 70 million SME Traders and in the process, we will also be expanding their cross border opportunities. We are excited to be a part of BSB and to join in the live pilot as a part of Phase 2."

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Annex A: Detailed Information on BSB

BSB sets out to:

- (a) Reduce the complexity of domestic and cross-border business
- (b) Drive intuitive awareness and adoption of digital processes;
- (c) Merit-based matching of trade and solutions; and
- (d) Support financial inclusion and education.

BSB envisions to connect platforms and marketplaces and aims to benefit various users in the global ecosystem:

- (a) For buyers and sellers, including SMEs – BSB will provide a wider choice of products and services from various platforms. This will enable SMEs to be included in global value chains and participate in cross-border trades;
- (b) For platforms – BSB will allow for enhanced service offerings such as financial services and logistics to support buyers and sellers for cross border traders; and
- (c) For governments – BSB will help drive their SME digitalisation plans and widen procurement options.

Annex B: Memorandum of Understanding between MAS, Union Bank of Philippines and UBX

MAS had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Union Bank of the Philippines (UBP)⁴ and its FinTech subsidiary, UBX to participate in the BSB POC system. UBX will integrate the functionalities of Sentro – a UBX project for a unique one-stop B2B marketplace for Filipino SMEs – with the BSB Phase One POC System (BSB POC).

This partnership will help SMEs in Singapore and Philippines test and discover new domestic and international business opportunities. Sentro (UBX) and UBP solutions, combined with access to a wider set of SME ecosystems through BSB POC, will allow Filipino SMEs as well as Singapore SMEs⁵ looking to do business in Philippines, access tools and solutions such as an SME website builder, SME B2B Marketplace, responsive logistics⁶, and financing to support the SMEs in digitising their essential business functions.

Sentro is a comprehensive marketplace of products and solutions curated for Filipino SMEs to help them grow their businesses and empower them to go digital. This partnership will help SMEs in Singapore and Philippines test and discover new domestic and international business opportunities. For example, Sentro (UBX) and UBP solutions, combined with access to a wider set of SME ecosystems through BSB POC, will allow Filipino SMEs as well as Singapore SMEs⁷ looking to do business in Philippines, access tools and solutions such as an SME website builder, and financing to support the SMEs in digitising their essential business functions.

⁴ UBP was awarded Philippines' Best Digital Bank at the Asianmoney Best Bank Awards for three consecutive years from 2017, 2018 and 2019.

⁵ Platforms and their SMEs, connected to BSB, e.g. from Singapore and other countries, could also benefit from Sentro's services.

⁶ Local logistics services for fulfilment within Philippines.

⁷ Platforms and their SMEs, connected to BSB, e.g. from Singapore and other countries, could also benefit from Sentro's services.