

PRESS RELEASE

ARA, STRAITS and JLFO LAUNCH S\$5 MILLION SME HELP FUND

A collaborative initiative by ARA Asset Management, The Straits Trading Company and JL Family Office to help local SMEs tide over the COVID-19 outbreak

Singapore, 12 February 2020 - ARA Asset Management Limited (**ARA**, 亚腾资产管理有限公司), The Straits Trading Company Limited (**Straits**, 海峡贸易有限公司) and JL Family Office (**JLFO**, JL 家族企业集团) today announced the launch of a S\$5 million **SME Help Fund** (中小型企业资助基金) to assist local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to tide over the COVID-19 outbreak which has impacted Singapore.

The fund, targeted to help SMEs who are facing temporary liquidity crunch in their business during this difficult period, will provide a low cost of borrowing and quick access to funds for working capital. Eligible SMEs must be GST-registered companies, which are majority-owned by Singaporeans and/or Singapore PRs and have been in operation for the past 12 months, and must apply for the loans via *Minterest*, an online crowdfunding platform which has been providing customised lending solutions to SMEs in Singapore. Loans of up to S\$50,000 for up to a period of six months at a preferential interest rate of 0.5% per month¹ may be approved as fast as within 48 hours, upon receipt of all completed documents.

In order to help SMEs quickly, the fund will leverage on fintech to assess credit scores and disburse funds efficiently. The Minterest crowdfunding platform, which already has a robust credit scoring, loan matching and fund disbursement process in place with a swift “time to decision”, was chosen for its proven experience, speed and reliability in extending loans to SMEs.

Minterest Group, a Singapore-based online financial services solutions provider established in 2016, is a leading non-bank fintech company in Singapore with dual licences to facilitate corporate loans through crowdfunding and personal loans at customised interest rates using technology. It has a cumulative deal origination of over S\$84 million in Singapore.

ARA Group CEO, Mr John Lim (林惠璋) said, “As a leading APAC real assets fund manager with a global reach and headquartered in Singapore, we receive daily updates on the COVID-19 outbreak and start to think about how we can help. Economies and lives are affected, and many businesses are going to be hard hit as the situation worsens. What we can do is to lend a helping hand to viable Singapore companies who may face short term cashflow problems as a result of the outbreak.”

Mr Lim added, “This collaboration is only made possible with technology. Without the robust credit scoring process and system that Minterest already has in place to assess companies and disburse funds, we would not be able to reach out to the SMEs efficiently.”

¹ There is a 2% processing fee levied by Minterest to cover loan administrative expenses.

Ms Chew Gek Khim (周玉琴), Executive Chairman of Straits said, “The Straits Trading Company is pleased to work with our business partners ARA and JLFO in this meaningful initiative. As one of Singapore’s oldest firms, we have gone through numerous crises. We believe this platform enables us to support fellow Singapore companies and this *SME Help Fund* should help to pivot them out of this downturn.”

CEO of JLFO, Mr Andy Lim (林浩文) said, “As Singapore continues to step up its efforts against the COVID-19, the economic impact on businesses looks likely to be long-drawn. During this period, we stand together with our local businesses to ride out the crisis. We hope that the *SME Help Fund* will be able to provide interim relief to SMEs.”

SMEs can apply via bit.ly/smehelpfund or email helpsme@minterest.sg to apply for loans under the *SME Help Fund*, starting from 15 February 2020. Once the loan applications are approved, funds will be disbursed to successful applicants within the next working day. For more information on Minterest, please visit <https://minterest.sg>.

- END -

Further information:

ARA Asset Management Limited

Judy Tan

judytan@ara-group.com

Tel: +65 6512 5161

Minterest Group

Charis Liao

charis.liao@minterest.sg

Tel: +65 6386 8623



About ARA Asset Management Limited

ARA Asset Management Limited (ARA or the Group) is a leading APAC real assets fund manager with a global reach. With S\$87 billion² in gross assets under management as at 31 December 2019, ARA manages listed and unlisted real estate investment trusts (REITs) and private real estate and infrastructure funds in 28 countries. As part of its investor-operator philosophy, ARA also operates a real estate management services division with local teams to manage its assets worldwide.

ARA's multi-platform, multi-product global fund management strategy, combined with its dedicated teams with in-depth local knowledge and expertise, enables the Group to offer enduring value to investors. Built on a foundation of strong corporate governance and business integrity, ARA counts some of the world's largest pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, financial institutions, endowments and family offices as its investors.

For more information, please visit <http://www.ara-group.com>.



[Follow ARA on LinkedIn](#)

About The Straits Trading Company Limited

Incorporated in 1887, The Straits Trading Company Limited has stakes in real estate, hospitality, resources and investments that span the Asia Pacific region. It owns a 89.5% stake in Straits Real Estate, a co-investment vehicle that seeks out real estate related investments and opportunities globally. It also owns a 20.95% stake in ARA Asset Management Limited, a premier global integrated real assets fund manager, and has a 30% interest in Far East Hospitality Holdings, a premier hospitality assets owner and operator. Straits Trading also engages in tin mining and smelting through its 54.8%-owned subsidiary, Malaysia Smelting Corporation Berhad, which is dual listed on Bursa Malaysia and SGX-ST.

For more information, please visit <http://www.stc.com.sg/>

About JL Family Office

JL Family Office (JLFO) is the investment holding group of companies founded by Mr John Lim, Co-Founder, Group Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of ARA Asset Management Limited. JLFO comprises an investment arm which oversees a global portfolio based on the investment philosophy of Mr John Lim, as well as a philanthropic arm, Lim Hoon Foundation. Its core portfolio companies include a 19.85% stake in ARA Asset Management, a leading APAC real assets fund manager with a global reach, and a 10.5% stake in Straits Real Estate, a co-investment vehicle with The Straits Trading Company Limited that seeks out real estate related investments and opportunities globally.

For more information, please visit <https://www.jlfo.com.sg/>

² Includes assets under management by ARA Asset Management Limited and the Group of companies and its Associates as at 31 December 2019

About Minterest Group

The Minterest Group is a Singapore-based online financial services solutions provider that connects borrowers with investors. Established in 2016, it is a leading non-bank fintech group with dual licences in Singapore enabling the group to facilitate, by leveraging on technology, corporate loans through marketplace lending and personal loans at customised interest rates. It has a cumulative deal origination volume of over S\$84 million in Singapore.

Minterest is founded on the belief that everyone is entitled access to financial solutions to meet their corporate and individual requirements. Using the team's deep financial experience and expertise, Minterest offers relevant financial and investment solutions to both borrowers and investors through the use of technology.

For more information, please visit www.minterest.sg