



Media Release

SMU hosts 6th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC6), on shaping the future of higher education in Asia and Europe

Singapore, Friday, 13 October 2017 – More than 200 university leaders, higher education experts, business representatives, government officials and student leaders from 51 Asian and European countries gathered at the Singapore Management University (SMU) for the 6th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC6), which took place in Singapore for the first time, from 9 to 13 October 2017. Organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), in partnership with SMU, the conference addressed key issues that surround and shape the education landscape in Asia and Europe, leading to a set of policy recommendations that will be discussed by 51 education ministers during the upcoming 6th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Ministers' Meeting, on 21-22 November 2017 in Seoul, Korea.

This year, ARC6 was themed "Future-ready Universities and Graduates: Quality Education Beyond the Horizon", with a focus on three areas: i. Interdisciplinarity in Education and Research; ii. Lifelong Learning: Holistic and Global Education; and iii. Access to Quality Education. To encourage discussion and debate on these topics, ARC6 engaged university leaders and students in panel sessions, action-focused workshops, reverse-mentoring sessions and networking receptions, including an Asia-Europe cultural evening.

Dr Janil Puthuchery, Singapore's Senior Minister of State for Education delivered the keynote speech on Singapore's approach to developing quality education to prepare globalised and future-ready citizens. During the subsequent exchange between ministers and ARC6 participants, Romanian Minister for National Education, HE Liviu-Marian Pop, called for universities around the world to bolster international collaboration and exchange, so as to foster a community of global-ready graduates. Romania will be hosting the 7th ASEF Rectors' Conference and Students' Forum (ARC7) and the 7th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting in 2019 in Bucharest.

Over five days, senior Asian and European university leaders, including SMU Provost Lily Kong, ASEAN University Network Executive Director Choltis Dhirathiti, European University Association Vice-President Martine Rahier, University of Hong Kong Vice-President Andy Hor, Ghent University Global Campus Vice-President Hun Taejun, Indian Institute of Management Bangalore Director G Raghuram and University of Tsukuba Vice-President

Caroline Benton, discussed the policy recommendations for the development of the higher-education sector. Discussion topics ranged from the promotion of cross-sector collaboration at local and international levels to boost the experiential and interdisciplinary value of curricula, to strategies in encouraging lifelong learning in the workforce to attract returning adult learners.

The Students' Forum, which took place from 9 to 12 October, gave a platform for student leaders and young academics to voice their perspectives on the role students play in ensuring an inclusive education ecosystem for all. University rectors, to whom student participants presented their policy recommendations, were encouraged by students' commitment towards contributing to society, even beyond graduation from university.

The policy recommendations presented to the university rectors, to ensure a sustainable, future-ready education system, were focused on:

- i. Access to quality education, such as by promoting the use of open educational resources and supporting efforts to increase the accessibility of all research publications.
- ii. Lifelong learning, such as by encouraging education institutions to leverage on new technologies that increase the opportunities for accessible and online learning.
- iii. Interdisciplinarity in education and research, such as by implementing more interdisciplinary modules that address real-world issues.

Professor Arnoud De Meyer, President, SMU, remarked in his opening address, "SMU is honoured to be partnering ASEF to host ARC6 in Singapore. This is an opportunity to bring together rectors and student leaders from leading universities and institutions in Asia and Europe, as well as policymakers and business representatives, to exchange views and collectively advance quality higher education for nurturing globally-ready and responsible citizens.

"All of us can appreciate the complexities of grooming future-ready graduates today. We live in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world, where the challenges brought on by politics, economics and society are constantly changing. SMU is committed to nurturing talents who have the confidence and knowledge to navigate an uncertain world with agility, who are globally conscientious citizens committed to making a positive global impact on society."

Ambassador Karsten Warnecke, Executive Director, ASEF, commented, "ARC represents a unique space for collaboration and transfer of best practices across the ASEM region. As the title of the conference highlights, we are here to look beyond the immediate fragment of time, and instead utilise a vision for the future – the future not only of the institutions we represent, but of our communities, our cities, our nations, and both regions. It has been a pleasure to work with SMU on this bi-regional higher-education meeting, which is recognised as the Official Dialogue Partner of the ASEM Education Ministers and translates

ASEF's values and mission in promoting knowledge and cooperation between people and institutions of Asia and Europe."

Mr Kelvin Fan, President of the SMU Ambassadorial Corps, led a reverse-mentoring session with a group of 20 Asian and European rectors. Besides sharing his experiences in representing SMU at the 2nd ASEF Young Leaders' Summit held in Seoul in September 2017, Mr Fan also gave his perspectives on how education could be enriched by leveraging the diversity and interdependency of academic disciplines.

During the presentation to rectors, he shared, "Today's youths face increasingly complex experiences and multi-faceted challenges. This necessitates both an interdisciplinary approach, one that facilitates the sharing of diverse perspectives and learning through experiences, as well as a team approach, where the educator and student collaborate with other sectors of society to impact the world positively."

Distinguished speakers at ARC6 were:

- Dr Janil Puthuchery, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Education, Singapore
- HE Liviu-Marian Pop, Minister of National Education, Romania
- Dr Christopher Tremewan, Secretary General, Association of Pacific Rim Universities
- Dr Choltis Dhirathiti, Executive Director, ASEAN University Network
- Prof Martine Rahier, Vice President, European University Association
- Ambassador Karsten Warnecke, Executive Director, ASEF
- Prof Arnoud De Meyer, President, SMU
- Prof Lily Kong, Provost, SMU
- Prof Muhammad Anis, Rector, Universitas Indonesia
- Prof Germinet Francois, University of Cergy-Pontoise
- Brother Dr Raymundo Suplido, President, De La Salle University
- Professor Kostas Gouliamos, Rector, European University Cyprus

For more information on ARC6, please visit

<http://www.asef.org/projects/themes/education/4121-6th-asef-rectors-conference-and-students-forum-arc6>

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About Singapore Management University

A premier university in Asia, the Singapore Management University (SMU) is internationally recognised for its world-class research and distinguished teaching. Established in 2000, SMU's mission is to generate leading-edge research with global impact and produce broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy. SMU education is known for its highly interactive, collaborative and project-based approach to learning, and for its technologically enabled pedagogy of seminar-style teaching in small class sizes.

Home to around 10,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students, SMU comprises six schools: School of Accountancy, Lee Kong Chian School of Business, School of Economics, School of Information Systems, School of Law, and School of Social Sciences. SMU offers a wide range of bachelors, masters and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with the six schools, as well as in interdisciplinary combinations of these areas.

SMU has an emphasis on generating rigorous, high-impact, and relevant multi-disciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance. SMU faculty members collaborate with leading international researchers and universities from USA, Europe, China and India, as well as with partners in the business community and public sector, through its research institutes, centres and labs. SMU's city campus is a state-of-the art facility located in the heart of downtown Singapore, fostering strategic linkages with business, government and the wider community. www.smu.edu.sg

About The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions and organisations of Asia and Europe. ASEF enhances dialogue, enables exchanges and encourages collaboration across the thematic areas of culture, education, governance, sustainable development, economy and public health.

ASEF is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation located in Singapore. Founded in 1997, it is the only institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

ASEF runs more than 25 projects a year, consisting of around 100 activities, mainly conferences, seminars, workshops, lectures, publications, and online platforms, together with about 125 partner organisations. Each year over 3,000 Asians and Europeans participate in ASEF's activities, and much wider audiences are reached through its various events, networks, and web-portals.

For more information, please visit www.ASEF.org