



**Welcome Address by
SMU Chairman Mr Ho Kwon Ping
at the Inaugural Societal Leadership Summit 2015
Thursday, 26 November 2015, 9am
Mochtar Riady Auditorium, Administration Building,
Singapore Management University**

Your Excellencies, fellow speakers, advisory board members, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good Morning.

It is my pleasure to be here this morning to open the inaugural Societal Leadership Summit 2015.

A warm welcome to all of you, especially those who have travelled far to Singapore Management University for this summit.

Looking around this auditorium, I see many friends with us here today including Ambassadors from Brazil, Brunei and the Philippines. It is definitely an honour considering the amount of years that each of them have put in as societal leaders in their own fields of expertise. I do want to take this opportunity to recognise some of the Advisory Board Members of the Institute of Societal Leadership (ISL) who have travelled to Singapore just to support this summit and attend our board meeting tomorrow.

We have Khun Arsa Sarasin, former Foreign Minister and Principal Private Secretary to the King of Thailand, Pak Arifin Siregar, former Governor, Bank of Indonesia, Mr Gita Wirjawan, former Minister of Trade of Indonesia, Dr Noeleen Heyzer, former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations who

will also be on the panel with us later on. And we could go down the list with Ivy, Sanjiv, Shankar, and Mr Ratan Tata who unfortunately cannot be with us today but without wanting to sound like a directory, I do want to thank them, and all of you for making time for this inaugural Societal Leadership Summit. I am always very grateful at the kind of support these leaders give to us at SMU, especially as board members of ISL.

One of our board members whom I'd like to mention is Ms Janet Lim, a Singaporean, who recently retired as the Assistant UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). She has spent many years tackling the complex global problem of saving the lives of refugees – an issue that continues to be real for us especially in Europe. I encourage all of you to read an article that she has written entitled “A World in Crisis – Conflicts, Refugees and Humanitarian Response” which she contributed to Catalyst Asia, ISL's magazine that Martin referred to earlier.

Janet has also recently been appointed Fellow of the School of Social Sciences here at SMU so Janet, welcome to the SMU family.

All of us can appreciate the complexities of societal issues today. Unlike mechanical problems, societal issues are living and breathing and as such, require new solutions. Ideas are always welcome but they will never be enough. Whether it is the problem of refugees in Europe, the continuous threat of terrorism or the environment in Southeast Asia, there is a need to deeply understand the depth of the problem, who needs to be involved and what sort of answers are really possible for successful execution – and continue to be sustainable over many years.

The rise of social enterprises as another cluster outside of traditional governments, NGOs and communities of volunteers (such as doctors without borders) is a fascinating development in the last 5-8 years. While we should encourage more people to contribute, we do also have to assess them intellectually and critically as to the role they play. Are these social enterprises doing real work that improve lives or are they simply vehicles for ego-

obsessed founders? The truth is always somewhere in the middle and we need to deliberate how greater collaboration will be better than each enterprise running their own thing. Only then can we better optimise resources such as talent and funding.

Our region is complex. With multiple religions, cultures and governments, each society operates with its own historical and geographical peculiarities. While peace has largely been the operating environment, the possibilities for tension and conflicts continue to exist – thereby often highlighting this region's desire for convergence amidst its need for divergence. All this provides us with a rich canvas for research and understanding.

The inaugural Societal Leadership Summit 2015 is our first attempt to bring the region closer to have a better understanding of the challenges we all face. Through such open platforms, we believe that good conversations will lead to sharper minds, better answers and new collaborations. This is a Summit to deepen our knowledge and efforts. Challenging one another will be as important as forging new relationships. Critical debates are always helpful.

The Institute for Societal Leadership is committed to not only organising the Summit and the various programmes for the region, but also researching on the concept of societal leadership. The Institute intends to provide strong research and development on the impact of leadership on the region's future. Finding the new intersection between academic rigour and real world insights will require deep analysis around the value of collaboration across sectors, the role of social enterprises versus non-governmental organisations and the skills needed for future societal leaders to resolve such issues. The Institute is a representation of the Singapore Management University's commitment to deepening content (such as our social issues) and broadening context (with the region as our neighbourhood). As we establish SMU as a 'Different U', we also want to be a more 'Relevant U'.

The Institute for Societal Leadership plays a key role in realising SMU's 'Vision 2025' of being a game changer, a catalyst and a global exemplar by

the work the Institute does regionally. By investing in new knowledge, forging new partnerships, and creating platforms such as this Summit, the Institute intends for greater collaboration and conversations to take place around issues that matter to all of us.

It is now my pleasure to declare the Societal Leadership Summit 2015 open.

Thank you and have a great summit ahead.