



Media Release

SMU offered safe and collaborative platform to discuss the Rakhine Crisis *"The Rakhine Crisis: Perspectives and Initiatives"*

Singapore, 8 May 2018 (Tuesday) – The Singapore Management University (SMU) yesterday organised a full day symposium at the SMU Hall to discuss the Rakhine Crisis.

Recognising the complex nature of the current crisis in the Rakhine State of Myanmar and the multi-dimensional impact and consequences it can have for the region, SMU has organised the symposium to provide a safe and collaborative platform for invited experts and stakeholders from a spectrum of concerned sectors to exchange views, deepen understanding of the issues at stake and identify initiatives to move things forward.

About 90 guests comprising diplomats, government representatives, academics and heads from think tanks, humanitarian NGOs, philanthropists and business investors listened to 20 panelists and presenters give their perspectives and reflections on the Rakhine situation. The session was held under Chatham House Rules to facilitate frank and genuine discussion on controversial or difficult issues by speakers who may not have otherwise had the appropriate forum to speak freely with the assurance of anonymity to encourage openness and free discussion.

SMU's Chairman Mr Ho Kwon Ping, remarked in his opening address, "We are indeed honoured to hold this symposium here at SMU to promote constructive discourse and ethnic and religious diversity and tolerance. The Rakhine Crisis is no longer an internal matter nor is it the politics of another country. This crisis is something that is not fully understood and it is imperative that SMU as a thought leader takes an active role in trying to increase a better understanding of the situation which impacts ASEAN and the region.

Dr Noeleen Heyzer, SMU's Lee Kong Chian Distinguished Fellow and member of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation, who played a key role in envisioning the symposium, said, "The timing of this symposium is ideal as there is an increasing sense of urgency and openness among all parties involved to find a way forward in resolving the Rakhine crisis. Through this sharing session, we hope that this network of concerned individuals and groups in the region can contribute to ongoing and emerging efforts to move the Rakhine towards a sustainable solution."

Said **Dr Thant Myint-U, Historian, Writer, and former Advisor to President of Myanmar**, "The Rakhine crisis is a humanitarian and human rights disaster that can derail Myanmar's long hoped for transitions to peace, prosperity and democratic government. At this critical juncture, it's absolutely urgent to try to find meaningful steps forward, however small, recognising the complexity of the issues and inflamed sensitivities involved. Gatherings like this conference can help identify those steps, however small, and, as importantly, help imagine a future that will be better for everyone."

Said **Ambassador U Win Mra, Chairperson of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission and member of the Rakhine Commission for the implementation of Recommendations from the Kofi Annan Advisory Commission on the Rakhine State**, "As a member of Kofi Annan Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, it's an honour and a privilege to be a speaker on the subject of implementation of the Commission's recommendations at this symposium. The symposium provided me with a platform to discuss on the challenges, opportunities and the progress so far achieved in implementing the recommendations. Successful implementation of the recommendations will eventually lead towards achieving a lasting peace and development in Rakhine State. Innovative ideas and thoughts from the discussions are helpful in finding a way out of the stalemated situation in the Rakhine State."

Said **Lieutenant General (retired) Agus Widjojo, Governor of Lemhannas, National Resilience Institute of the Republic of Indonesia**, "I extend my highest appreciation to SMU for organising such an important symposium to discuss the Rakhine crisis. It is timely to organise such a symposium considering the (non) progress of the crisis. The composition of speakers coming from a spectrum of related sectors made it possible to come up with a comprehensive solution to resolve the humanitarian crisis. I am honoured to have been invited to such an important symposium".

The symposium ended on a positive note which saw the audience and speakers from various countries including Myanmar, Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore giving their insights and recommendations on how we could rethink our engagement for sustainable solutions to the Rakhine Crisis.

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 to produce broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy. SMU's education is known for its highly interactive, collaborative and project-based approach to learning.

Home to over 10,000 students across undergraduate, postgraduate professional and postgraduate research programmes, SMU is comprised of 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's 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. SMU's city campus is a modern facility located in the heart of downtown Singapore, fostering strategic linkages with business, government and the wider community. www.smu.edu.sg

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