

**SPEECH BY MR TAN CHONG HUAT,
CHAIRMAN OF RHT RAJAN MENON FOUNDATION,
AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF SMU PRO BONO CENTRE
ON 6 OCTOBER 2017 AT SMU SCHOOL OF LAW**

Good Afternoon,

- Former Chief Justice Mr Chan Sek Keong, currently Senior Judge of the Singapore Supreme Court and Advisor to the SMU Pro Bono Centre;
- Professor Lily Kong, Provost, Singapore Management University;
- Professor Goh Yihan, Dean, SMU School of Law;
- Associate Professor Rathna Koman, Associate Professor of the School of Law & Director of the SMU Pro Bono Centre;
- Members of the Pro Bono Centre Advisory Board;
- Patron & Directors of RHT Rajan Menon Foundation;
- Partners of RHTLaw Taylor Wessing and Leaders of the RHT Group of Companies;
- Distinguished guests, SMU students and members of the media;

A pleasant welcome to all.

Today marks a momentous occasion in the legal fraternity with RHT Rajan Menon Foundation teaming up with the Singapore Management University Pro Bono Centre. This collaboration adds to the existing foundation and strengthens the culture of pro bono in the legal fraternity. This collaboration also seeks to bridge the gap for those seeking help for hardships they face and are unable to afford legal fees.

It is great to see so many young aspiring lawyers here today and heartening to know that many of you are involved in pro bono work, with some even serving far beyond the mandatory hours required of law students. Do we know that our former Chief Justice Mr Chan was instrumental in laying the pro bono foundation we have today, and the clarion call for lawyers and law students to be involved in pro bono was made by Mr Chan as recent as in the year 2011? At that time the legal fraternity was so slow to heed Mr Chan's call that he had to suggest making pro bono

mandatory for lawyers, and that lawyers who did not comply will be asked to donate hard cash.

6 years down the road, today pro bono is mainstream and embraced by our 2 law schools in SMU and NUS, and the legal fraternity. This we have Mr Chan largely to thank for his foresight and leadership.

When we informed Mr Chan of this collaboration and asked him to be the Advisor to the Centre, Mr Chan readily agreed. As Professor Lily Kong has said Mr Chan will guide the Centre to make significant impact for the pro bono cause. Let us thank Mr Chan, who has served in all the high offices of the law in Singapore, with a round of applause.

Pro bono work is more than just giving complimentary legal advice, it enriches the giver, both young law students and lawyers alike, as it broadens our legal and non-legal skills. Being involved in pro bono work impacts lives in a meaningful way.

Pro bono publico or pro bono in short, originated from the latin language "for the public good". On the SMU website, it is defined as "done without compensation for the public good". To me, pro bono is the ministering of the law in the service of society, and a satisfying way of repaying our community for our success as well as our privilege as a member of the legal profession.

Allow me to share with everyone a little on RHT Rajan Menon Foundation. The Foundation is the corporate social responsibility vehicle of RHTLaw Taylor Wessing and the RHT Group of Companies. It is a registered charity and grant-making philanthropic organisation. Our tagline, "Our Success, Our Responsibility", speaks of how we must utilise our achievements and talents in a responsible and compassionate manner. The Foundation's vision is to establish, inspire and encourage a philanthropic culture among the legal and corporate fraternity of giving back to the community.

Through the SMU Pro Bono Centre, students can expect to be mentored by seasoned lawyers to gain experience and learn tactics useful for their

career. To all students, I encourage you to continue serving in pro bono work when you enter the workforce. The skills and knowledge you will acquire and accumulate in practice extends beyond serving your paying clientele, and should include people who require your outstretched helping hand.

SMU School of Law has done a great work in cultivating the pro bono spirit in students and the Foundation is pleased to support this continuous effort to inculcate a sense of empathy in future generations of lawyers to come. We anticipate the close partnership with the Centre will offer law students more opportunities to use their legal training to benefit the community (initially in Singapore and then perhaps in Asean), as they journey towards graduating and becoming full-fledged lawyers.

As a glimpse of how the collaboration will look like I will share with you briefly our impending Eldercare Project. RHT Rajan Menon Foundation is working on a guidebook to educate the elderly on steps they should and can take as they enter their golden years. With Singapore's aging population, we want to ensure that our elders know that the law empowers them to take charge of their future affairs. There are various issues for our elderly to consider when planning for their finances and personal matters, and the Foundation hopes to equip them with this necessary knowledge and information. The co-operation with the SMU Pro Bono Centre in this regard will no doubt be helpful – having SMU law students working alongside our lawyers to assist in drafting wills and lasting powers of attorney is meaningful pro bono work that can really make a difference to the elderly members of our community.

In summary, today's launch of the SMU Pro Bono Centre, supported by RHT Rajan Menon Foundation, signifies both parties' commitment in instilling a sense of social responsibility in law students and lawyers towards ministering the law in the service of society.

The Foundation's work with the Centre will enable us to extend the impact of our pro bono initiatives by combining resources from the corporate world and the legal

community with the passion for pro bono that Mr Chan, SMU, RHTLaw Taylor Wessing and RHT Group of Companies exemplify.

I end here with this quote by Robert Byrne. "The purpose of life is a life of purpose."

Thank you and enjoy the rest of the programme.