

**Opening Remarks by SMU President Prof Lily Kong**  
**SMU Dialogue on Talent Development, Jakarta | 28 April 2026**

His Excellency Kwok Fook Seng, Singapore Ambassador to Indonesia

Mr Anindya Bakrie, Chairman, Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Mr Haryanto Adikoesoemo, Chairman, SMU International Advisory Council Indonesia

Members of SMU International Advisory Council Indonesia

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

*Selamat siang ibu-ibu dan bapak-bapak*

(Good day, ladies and gentlemen)

*Selamat datang ke acara (ah-chara) kami*

(Welcome to our function)

*Suatu hormatan bagi kami | atas kehadiran | para tamu undangan*

(You have honoured us greatly with your presence)

It is a pleasure to be here in Jakarta, a city that reflects both the dynamism and ambition of Indonesia today.

Let me begin by expressing my appreciation to our partners and colleagues who have made this engagement possible, and to all of you for joining us. Your presence reflects a shared commitment to education, partnership, and regional collaboration.

I would also like to extend a special thanks to our Guest-of-Honour, His Excellency Kwok Fook Seng, Singapore's Ambassador to Indonesia. Ambassador Kwok, you joined us as well at the launch of SMU's Jakarta representative office back in 2022, and we are deeply grateful for your steadfast support over the years. We are also honoured to have Anindya Bakrie here with us. I understand you flew back from Maluku in order to join us this morning.

Singapore and Indonesia share a longstanding and strong relationship, built on trust and mutual respect. Today, that relationship continues to be defined by trade and investment, and increasingly by the movement of talent, ideas, and capabilities across borders. Beyond our academic mission, SMU seeks to develop leaders who can operate across policy, business, and society and who will help shape Asia's future.

Indonesia today stands at a significant inflection point. With one of the largest and youngest populations in the region, and a rapidly expanding digital economy, the opportunities ahead are substantial. That potential depends not simply on producing more graduates, but on preparing people for a changing world of work.

Employers today are seeking individuals and teams who can think critically, work across disciplines, and make sound judgements in complex environments, rather than simply execute routine tasks. In that sense, the challenge is not one of access to education, but of how well education shapes talent readiness.

This is where we believe we can make a meaningful contribution. Over the past few years, SMU has worked closely with Indonesian industry partners to develop executive education and customised training programmes that respond directly to workforce needs. Through SMU Executive Development and SMU Academy, together with partners such as Bank Mandiri, PT Bumi Resources, and Kadin, we have supported leadership development programmes for nearly 1,000 Indonesian executives and professionals.

We have also partnered with universities beyond Jakarta – in Surabaya, Medan, and Bogor, to conduct workshops and masterclasses for undergraduates as part of their preparation for the workforce, helping to bridge the gap between education and employment.

At the same time, we are seeing growing interest from Indonesian professionals pursuing postgraduate education at SMU. These engagements have given us a clearer understanding of Indonesia's evolving talent needs, from both industry and policy perspectives.

Conversely, through initiatives such as the Global Ready Talent Programme, we have facilitated close to 200 Singapore students to intern in Indonesia, a threefold increase since the programme began in 2024. With perhaps superficial understandings of Indonesia to begin with, our students return home with an enhanced appreciation for Singapore's largest neighbour, direct experience of its dynamic business environment and lifelong friends. More than internships, they are

pathways to deeper regional understanding, and often the beginning of long-term professional relationships across borders.

Today, we are taking the next step in this journey with the establishment of SMU Indonesia as a subsidiary of Singapore Management University. Indonesia already has a strong and growing higher education sector, with many excellent institutions. Hence, we are not here to offer traditional degree programmes. Our focus is on working with executives, professionals and organisations seeking to strengthen capabilities within their workforce. The SMU Indonesia team, led by Shoeb Kagda, working closely with our campus in Singapore and our Indonesian partners, aims to deliver practical, industry-relevant executive education through short courses, modular programmes, and customised training. The emphasis is not on credentials but on outcomes and impact, and what people are able to do differently because of what they have learned. Above all, we hope this will strengthen enduring people-to-people ties across ASEAN.

None of this can be achieved in isolation, and this is why partnerships with Indonesian universities, industry, and government are at the heart of what we do. Alongside our work with industry, we have been privileged to work with leading Indonesian universities including Universitas Indonesia, Universitas Gadjah Mada, and Institut Teknologi Bandung. These collaborations enable joint learning, research, and the development of teaching materials that reflect Asian and Indonesian business realities. In 2024, SMU hosted the RI-SING University Network Conference, which brought together leading universities from both Singapore and Indonesia to deepen collaboration in research and knowledge exchange. Together with

Universitas Indonesia's Executive Leadership Institute, SMU has delivered a series of masterclasses to Indonesian executives in the areas of Digital Transformation and Sustainability.

Our Urban Institute has also worked with Institut Teknologi Bandung and the Jakarta Smart City Centre to explore solutions to urban challenges — including how digital tools can help improve mobility and city life.

These collaborations are closely aligned with SMU's distinctive approach to learning — one that is interactive, practice-oriented, and grounded in real-world contexts.

This is also why case learning is such an important part of the SMU experience. We are proud that SMU's Centre for Case Learning Excellence is ranked 6th in the world and 1st in Asia for case impact by Financial Times. Bringing this expertise into practice, we run case-writing workshops that equip academics and practitioners with the tools to develop locally grounded teaching cases. This helps ensure that what is taught reflects the realities of doing business in Asia, not only imported assumptions from elsewhere. We also work closely with government agencies and industry partners who help shape curriculum and ensure relevance. This ecosystem approach matters because education, industry, and policy must move together.

Looking ahead, our ambition for SMU Indonesia is clear. We hope to deepen our engagement across multiple fronts, learn with our Indonesia partners, and contribute to strengthening Indonesia's talent pipeline, particularly in areas where there are clear gaps between education and employment. We also see SMU Indonesia as a platform for greater regional integration. By facilitating exchanges and collaborative

programmes, we hope to support the flow of talent and ideas between Indonesia, Singapore, and the wider region.

In addition to today's dialogue on talent development, I will also be spending time with our International Advisory Council members in Indonesia and look forward very much to reconnecting with our alumni community here. Our commitment to Indonesia is long-term. We are here to build partnerships, learn together, share knowledge and support the development of future-ready talent across the region.

To our partners and friends in Indonesia, thank you once again for your trust and support. We look forward to building this next chapter together. Thank you.

[1,188 words | 10 + mins allocated]