



## Media Release

### **Dentons Rodyk's Annual Thought Leadership Event Explores the Cornerstones of Singapore's Success**

*Singapore, 2 November 2023* – Singapore's global law firm Dentons Rodyk hosted its annual national thought leadership event, the Dentons Rodyk Dialogue 2023 today, 2 November 2023. Organised in partnership with Singapore Management University (SMU), the event took place at the Yong Pung How School of Law with more than 200 guests attending in person, including the guest-of-honour, Mr Edwin Tong, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, and Second Minister for Law.

Titled "Forging a Path to Excellence: The Singapore Experience", the event brought together a distinguished panel comprising:

- **Mr Edwin Tong**, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, and Second Minister for Law
- **Professor Dan W. Puchniak**, Director, Centre for Commercial Law in Asia, SMU
- **Mr Mark Tham**, Country Managing Director, Accenture Singapore
- **Mr Zhulkarnain Abdul Rahim**, Senior Partner, Dentons Rodyk
- **Mr Gerald Singham**, Global Vice-Chair and ASEAN CEO, Dentons

Guest-of-honour Minister Tong touched on the very different situation Singapore finds itself in today, compared to half a century ago. "On top of external challenges such as geopolitical tensions, climate change and an intense competition for global talent, Singapore also faces internal challenges such as our ageing population. This, coupled with our declining birth rates, will result in a shrinking labour supply, and a less dynamic and vibrant economy. That is why we need to supplement our workforce with foreigners. Cost of living is also another issue that not only impacts Singaporeans. Talents must find it financially viable to live and work in Singapore. Likewise, social cohesion plays a crucial role in enhancing Singapore as a business hub. Greater social cohesion helps to foster collaborations and partnerships, attract and retain talent, as they feel more connected and integrated into the community and strengthen economic resilience, as people are more likely to help each other, and less likely to flee at the first signs of trouble," Minister Tong said.

On the significance of the Dialogue, Professor Lily Kong, President of SMU, said, "Making common advances against global headwinds require individuals and polities to first acknowledge and understand one another's positions in a facilitative setting. Here is where academia can play important roles. Academic institutions are where deep thinking and reflection, and robust and insightful analysis, take place. Here too is where dialogue and debate provide the opportunity to sharpen ideas and insights. Within academia, discursive engagement is rich. But when academia convenes debate and dialogue between intellectuals and practitioners, including policy makers, the opportunity to deepen our collective understanding of global and societal challenges is further enhanced."

Dentons' Global Vice-Chair and ASEAN CEO Gerald Singham said in his opening remarks: "Singapore's strategic location, robust judicial system, political and economic stability makes us the trusted gateway to Asia. According to EDB Singapore, over 7,000 multinational corporations have made Singapore their home, despite our country's shortage of land and natural resources. This is because we have built over the years, an ecosystem of trust and efficiency. We embraced

Singaporeans as our number one asset and possess a first-class labour force that is vibrant, multilingual, and highly skilled.”

In his presentation titled ‘Singapore’s Unique Approach to Shareholder Stewardship’, Professor Dan W. Puchniak, Director at the Centre for Commercial Law in Asia at SMU explained how Singapore is the only country to reconceive stewardship to fit the Asian corporate governance context and why this is important for driving sustainability in Asia and beyond. “Considering the legal misfit of the UK Code to Singapore, why was Singapore’s Stewardship model a successful secret? There are many reasons, with the most important being that Singapore recognised the reality that Asia is different than Anglo-America because its stock exchanges are dominated by family firms and controlling shareholders. This was the genesis of the Stewardship Principles for Family Businesses that Stewardship Asia released in 2018,” Professor Puchniak noted.

Accenture Singapore’s Country Managing Director Mr Mark Tham shared in his presentation how generative artificial intelligence is a game-changer that is disrupting societies and businesses. “Generative AI can transform work by impacting productivity, roles and driving new sources of revenue. The automation of manual and repetitive tasks through generative AI can free up 40% of working hours. Likewise, generative AI can also create new roles such as prompt engineers that didn’t exist before,” Mark explained.

Dentons Rodyk Senior Partner and Member of Parliament Zhulkarnain Abdul Rahim shared unique perspectives from his roles as both a law maker and a law practitioner and spoke about the balance that must be struck between a calibrated and conservative approach versus a first mover and competitive approach by regulators and stakeholders during the panel discussion. The panellists also discussed Singapore's strategy in navigating these global challenges and what the country must do to sustain its competitive edge.

In her closing remarks, Professor Lee Pey Woan, Dean, SMU Yong Pung How School of Law, thanked all the speakers for sharing their insights and expertise. She said, “Because of the porous nature of our natural ecosystems and the digital medium, and how integrated the world economy is, society’s most pressing problems affect all of us. Whether our responses are deemed adequate by future generations will depend on how much effort and support we can collectively muster from all corners of society today. That is why it is so fortunate that we are hearing from leading speakers in the areas of policy-making, industry and academia explain and evaluate Singapore’s unique pathways to excellence in business and innovation. They have generously shared their insights and experience, giving us overviews from jurisdictional and sectoral perspectives, and even glimpses of the many possibilities that lie in the future.”

Find out more about the [Dentons Rodyk Dialogue 2023](#).

---

For further enquiries, please contact:

**Jackson Thia**

Manager, Marketing Communications  
Dentons Rodyk & Davidson LLP  
+65 6885 3792  
[jackson.thia@dentons.com](mailto:jackson.thia@dentons.com)

**Huang Peiling**

Senior Asst Director, Corporate Communications  
Singapore Management University  
+65 98453361  
[plhuang@smu.edu.sg](mailto:plhuang@smu.edu.sg)

**Athene Chiew**

Executive, Marketing Communications  
Dentons Rodyk & Davidson LLP  
+65 6885 3639  
[athene.chiew@dentons.com](mailto:athene.chiew@dentons.com)

### **About Dentons Rodyk Dialogue**

The Dentons Rodyk Dialogue is a partnership between Dentons Rodyk & Davidson LLP and the Singapore Management University (SMU) to create a major forum for thought leaders to share ideas and views affecting Asia's legal, business, cultural and economic landscape. Ultimately, it is hoped that these conversations will influence attitudes and policies resulting in a better world for all. The Dentons Rodyk Dialogue aims to be the essential event for legal, business and academic leaders to converge in order to discuss pressing issues and world trends. The Dialogue is an event organised under the auspices of the SMU Yong Pung How School of Law's Centre for Commercial Law in Asia.

Previous editions of the Dentons Rodyk Dialogue have featured luminaries in the government, academic and business sectors such as Singapore Cabinet Ministers Ms Grace Fu, Mr S. Iswaran and Mr Desmond Lee, former Canadian Prime Minister Mr Stephen Harper, Professor Tania Voon (University of Melbourne), Professor Anne Cheung (University of Hong Kong), Mr Max Bittner (former CEO of Lazada) and more. The events were covered by the national and international press.

### **About Dentons Rodyk**

Dentons Rodyk is one of Singapore's biggest law firms and part of the world's largest, with a team of around 200 lawyers offering clients a full suite of legal services necessary to do business locally and globally. With over 160 years of establishment, consistently ranked highly in leading publications, we pride ourselves on providing the highest quality advice to our clients while maintaining strong working relationships with key public sector agencies and leading organisations in the private sector. Our combination with global law firm Dentons, makes us part of the world's largest law firm with more than 12,500 professionals in over 160 locations in more than 80 countries. Designed to be different, Dentons Rodyk can help you grow, protect, operate and finance your business. Our polycentric and purpose-driven approach, together with our commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity and ESG, ensures we challenge the status quo to stay focused on what matters most to you.

The first global pan-ASEAN law firm, Dentons ASEAN has an established history in Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Vietnam and Singapore and will continue to grow our presence through combinations with exceptional local firms across the ASEAN region and help clients navigate change wherever they are located.

In the new dynamic decade, clients continue to be confronted with complex scenarios and want to work with a purpose-driven law firm that has the experience and confidence to help them thrive at wherever they are located. Through our combinations with firms that are leaders in their respective communities and local markets, along with the partner firms in Dentons' Nextlaw Referral Network, Dentons is ideally positioned to support our clients everywhere in ASEAN and around the globe.

### **About SMU Yong Pung How School of Law**

SMU's law school was renamed Yong Pung How School of Law (YPHSL) on 11 April 2021 to celebrate and honour the late Dr Yong Pung How, Singapore's former Chief Justice and SMU's third Chancellor.

The law school had proudly welcomed its first cohort of 116 students in August 2007. Taught by a dynamic faculty with postgraduate degrees from renowned universities, the School aims to nurture its students to become excellent lawyers who will contribute significantly to society. Trained with the ability to contextualise legal expertise and to think across disciplines and geographical borders coupled with SMU's interactive pedagogy, SMU's law graduates are confident articulate and analytically agile.

The School offers a four-year full-time Bachelor of Laws programme, a five-year double-degree programme which combines law with Accountancy, Business, Economics, Computing & Information Systems or Social Sciences, a three-year Juris Doctor programme, a Master of Laws programme, as well as continuing legal education. From Academic Year 2020-2021, the School also jointly offers a new Bachelor of Science (Computing & Law) with the SMU School of Computing and Information Systems. This new degree will produce IT and legal professionals who are adept at bridging technology and law.

Research at the SMU YPHSL has a strong focus in three main inter-related areas – Law and Technology, Transnational Commercial law in Asia, and Dispute Resolution. The School has also set up legal research centres focusing on A.I. and data governance, computational law, commercial law, and international dispute resolution. [www.law.smu.edu.sg](http://www.law.smu.edu.sg)