

**SPEECH BY PROFESSOR TAN CHORH CHUAN
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE
AT THE CONFERMENT OF THE
HONORARY DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LETTERS ON
HIS EXCELLENCY MR BAN KI-MOON, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS
TUESDAY, 30 AUGUST 2016
AT THE ISTANA**

Your Excellency Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, President of the Republic of Singapore and Chancellor,
National University of Singapore

Your Excellency Mr Ban Ki-moon, Honorary Graduand, and Secretary-General of the United
Nations, and Mrs Ban

Mr Goh Chok Tong, Emeritus Senior Minister

Madam Halimah Yacob, Speaker of Parliament

Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Dr Janil Puthuchery, Minister of State, Ministry of Communications and Information &
Ministry of Education

NUS Chairman

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

NUS is 111 years old this year. In many ways, the development and growth of our university has mirrored, and supported, that of our country, particularly over the past 50 years when Singapore transformed itself from a third-world to a first-world nation.

Today, NUS is widely regarded as one of the world's leading universities and top in Asia, yet it remains deeply rooted in service to Singapore and society.

At the very heart of our strong progress as an institution is our singular focus on cultivating and recruiting high quality talent, and providing the enabling environment for talented individuals and groups to realise their potential, to excel and to contribute to make our society and our world a better place.

This emphasis is especially important in relation to our students, many of whom will later contribute and lead in diverse sectors and fields. To enable this, NUS' educational approach reflects our conviction that beyond the training of the mind, our students must also develop strong personal qualities, interpersonal skills, empathy and compassion; that beyond the attainment of individual success, our graduates should also be concerned with broader societal challenges and be engaged in helping to contribute to their resolution.

In this regard, it is vital for us to hold up and celebrate individuals who have truly made a difference to the lives of others, by leading change and solutions that address the most pressing challenges that confront the world.

NUS is therefore truly delighted and honoured to confer the Honorary Doctor of Letters on His Excellency, Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN).

This award recognises Mr Ban's unique and remarkable achievements at the helm of the UN, in particular, for his leadership in advancing global cooperation against climate change, the promotion of sustainable development, and the advocacy of women's rights and gender equality. As Asia's top university, NUS is happy to honour one of the most distinguished Asians on the world stage.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's first encounter with the UN happened long before he began his illustrious career as a diplomat, and it left a deep impact on his outlook. As a young child displaced by the Korean War, the sight of the blue flag of the UN symbolised protection, sustenance, and most importantly, hope for a better future.

Over the course of his distinguished career, and throughout his two-terms as the UN's eighth Secretary-General, Mr Ban has unwaveringly held forth that the UN truly represents "the home and hope of humanity", and that the UN, its member states, and its related agencies, are entrusted with the duty and moral responsibility to take on global challenges, and in particular, ensure dignity and rights for the poor, vulnerable and dispossessed of the world. He has consistently advocated that these complex challenges require global solidarity and approaches, and that ultimately, we all share a common vision of promoting greater peace, prosperity and security throughout the world.

The signature issue of Secretary-General Ban's tenure has been climate change, one that he has described as the "quintessentially global issue" of our age. Climate change, he observed, "carries no passport", and no community or region can hope to escape its reach or impact.

Climate change is characterised by its global complexity, and the many interlinkages that span across societies, governments, science, technology and international agencies. It is also inextricably bound up with sustainable development, both for developed and developing nations alike.

To deal with climate change, a multilateral and concerted response is needed. And Secretary-General Ban has been tireless in his efforts to rally and galvanise support from governments, non-governmental organisations, businesses and communities, to build the broad consensus needed to take sustained action. He has retained a special concern for the poor and vulnerable, that they too must be accorded dignity of livelihood and consideration in the low-emission and low-carbon global economy of the future.

The Paris Agreement of 2015 marks a major landmark step towards a climate-resilient future, with 195 parties agreeing to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Secretary-General Ban has described the Agreement as an "insurance policy" for the planet, while

recognising that much remains to be done to secure our common ecological and energy future.

To that end, the UN is leading the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — an ambitious, sweeping, and transformational framework that seeks to integrate and balance three key dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. It is an action-oriented and people-centred initiative that seeks to eradicate extreme poverty, and deliver tangible benefits for our global community, our planet and our shared prosperity.

Singapore is a signatory to the Paris Agreement, and has pledged to lower its Emissions Intensity by 36 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030. NUS likewise is doing our part to contribute to sustainable development, responsible stewardship of resources, and conservation of biodiversity. Many of our Schools and research centres are pursuing research and its translation into technologies, policies and approaches that contribute to these goals.

NUS has also committed to making our campus more environmentally sustainable. We are on track to achieve our target of reducing carbon emissions by 23 per cent below a Business-As-Usual scenario by 2020, and to decrease our Energy Usage Intensity profile despite increased research and teaching activities.

Crucially, our efforts include nurturing green leaders for the future. Many NUS students have a passion for, and are actively involved in, student-led initiatives in energy conservation, waste reduction, and biodiversity preservation. In this and many other aspects, our students, together with the rest of the NUS community, can draw deep inspiration from the example of Secretary-General Ban.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has embodied the highest ideals of the UN, as a global leader who has done so much to help improve and secure the well-being of people throughout the world. NUS is honoured and proud to have the privilege to confer upon Mr Ban Ki-moon the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters.

Thank you.