

**Speech by NUS President Prof Tan Eng Chye  
at the NUS Global Citizen Conference 2019  
Monday 24 Jun 2019, 3.30 pm  
UTown Auditorium 1**

A very good afternoon to colleagues, friends and students. Thank you for inviting me to the NUS Global Citizen Conference 2019. To all our international guests and participants, a very warm welcome to the NUS campus.

The NUS Global Citizen Conference is a forum organised by the NUS Students' Union as a platform for participants to exchange knowledge, experiences and ideas on global issues. We hope that participants will be deeply enriched from the diversity of perspectives and experiences.

Every one of us here is a busy individual; naturally, we are often preoccupied with our immediate surroundings and local communities; our family, school environment, and our local government policies. While we are all distinctively part of a local community, we are also, global citizens; our lives are shaped by global trends and developments. It is thus apt, that we also take time to consider global issues, how they affect us, and how we may play a role in helping our local societies and communities to respond and adapt.

To all the young and energetic students here, Shakespeare has said, the world is your oyster. I encourage you to seize opportunities that this globalized world presents.

We are living in exciting times, at the cusp of Industry 4.0; it is the era of smart machines, big data, networked technologies and the internet of things. The world is getting more interconnected and interdependent. Technological developments are changing the way people, society, businesses and politics interact. As with all industrial revolutions, jobs are going to change; the nature of work is going to fundamentally change. Robotic automation and intelligent machines will take away many jobs. Yet, there are emerging roles and skills in demand in areas like artificial intelligence, machine learning, data analytics and various IT aspects such as cybersecurity.

Globalisation and Industry 4.0 present opportunities. There are however, also genuine costs and problems that we will have to acknowledge, examine and address. There are deep concerns with growing trade imbalances (the trade war is unfolding before our eyes), worsening income inequality, loss of jobs, job stability and safety nets, social stratification, ideological divides, damage to nature and the environment, amongst others. Technological progress, does not automatically lead to equal and sustainable impact.

The theme of this year's conference, Equality and Justice in relation to globalisation, is thus a timely and relevant one. It recognizes that we need policy innovations and interventions by individuals, civil society and government, to address the impact of globalisation, particularly for those who are vulnerable.

I hope that all participants will have the opportunity to engage in candid, respectful and constructive discussions, even if each one of us holds strong personal views on this evocative topic. Globalisation brings people together, but it can also accentuate our differences. It behooves us then to harness diversity in a fruitful way, to inform and broaden our perspectives. This is an inclusive platform, and we must learn from each other. Collectively, we can forge a stronger, deeper consensus, and create better solutions to complex, global challenges. I hope each participant will benefit from added wisdom and perspectives, so that your ideas and ambitions can be sharpened and translated into practical solutions for your local communities, adapted to suit the prevailing culture and operating context.

To all students here today, your learning will not end at the point of graduation. No university degree programme will be able to teach you all the knowledge and skills you need for your working life. In this world of rapid change, you must prepare yourselves for a life of change and uncertainty. Lifelong learning will become a necessity. NUS foresees that many of our graduates will return to NUS in future, for their lifelong learning needs, and we have made enrolment to NUS valid for 20 years from the point of undergraduate admission.

At NUS, we aim to help all students become more intellectually versatile, to prepare them for a future of lifelong learning. Our curriculum has moved beyond introducing breadth requirements, to creating many pathways for students to pursue double majors or major-minor combinations, to be trained in more than one discipline. Our students will have greater flexibility in their career choices.

NUS also recognises that it is critical to strengthen the horizontal foundation competencies through a solid general education programme, so that students can engage with deep learning across a broad range of specialisations in future, wherever their careers take them. Through General Education, all students will engage in inquiry and discussions about social, cultural, scientific and historical topics that will lay the foundations for important life skills such as critical thinking, communication and reasoning. The General Education framework has a forward thinking orientation with new skills in Computational Thinking and Design Thinking being embedded.

I encourage all our youths here today to make good use of the many learning and exposure opportunities that your respective universities offer. Venture beyond your comfort zones to develop yourself deeply and broadly, so that you are better equipped for a future of globalisation and Industry 4.0. As a rounded individual, you will also be in a stronger position to contribute to the betterment of society in pursuing social causes you feel strongly for.

On this note, I wish everyone here a fruitful and enjoyable conference. Thank you.