

24 - 26 June 2025  
Singapore

# THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COHESIVE SOCIETIES

Cohesive Societies, Resilient Futures



Conference Booklet

# Welcome to the International Conference on Cohesive Societies 2025!

Welcome to Singapore!

Thank you for joining us at the International Conference on Cohesive Societies (ICCS) 2025. This is the third edition of the ICCS conference series, since its inauguration in 2019.

The ICCS is a leading platform for multicultural and interfaith dialogue and solutioning. It aims to inspire conversations about how we can forge cohesive and resilient multicultural societies.

These conversations are timely and urgent as we navigate an increasingly complex world. In many parts of the world, trust in institutions has declined, cultural divides have deepened, and polarising forces continue to erode social trust. Yet, we believe these challenges are not insurmountable. Leaders and communities must remain committed to work together to confront these challenges.

ICCS 2025, themed “Cohesive Societies, Resilient Futures”, aims to champion this global endeavour to inspire hope, foster inclusion and build momentum towards building harmonious and resilient multicultural societies. This conference will bring together more

than 1,100 policymakers, academics, and leaders from diverse civic and religious organisations across more than 50 countries to exchange insights and best practices on fostering harmony, mutual respect, and confidence in diverse communities.

We are especially honoured to host ICCS 2025 on the occasion of Singapore’s 60<sup>th</sup> year of independence. This milestone underscores the importance of multiculturalism and social cohesion to our identity as a young, multi-racial and multi-religious nation – and how they remain a continuous work in progress.

No society has all the answers to cohesion, but we believe that when people have a chance to learn from one another and realise that we have much in common, empathy and confidence between diverse communities will flourish. Our shared humanity can, and must, unite us against forces that seek to divide.

We hope you will find ICCS 2025 enriching and beneficial, and forge lasting friendships during your time in Singapore. Let us learn from one another,



Ambassador  
Ong Keng Yong  
Executive Deputy Chairman  
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS)



Ms Amy Hing  
Deputy Secretary (Community & Youth)  
Ministry of Culture, Community & Youth

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## Need Assistance?

For any queries during the conference, please contact us at 6431 5471 (9:00am to 5:00pm from 24 to 26 June 2025) or email [iccs-mail@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:iccs-mail@ntu.edu.sg).

**We're here to help!**

# About the International Conference on Cohesive Societies



# About the International Conference on Cohesive Societies

## About the International Conference on Cohesive Societies

The International Conference on Cohesive Societies (ICCS) is a leading platform for interfaith and multicultural dialogue, bringing together global thought leaders, policymakers, community practitioners, and young leaders. Held in Singapore — one of the world's most religiously diverse countries — ICCS offers participants the opportunity to engage with the latest trends in social cohesion, share best practices, and explore innovative ideas for building cohesive and resilient multicultural societies. Since its inception, ICCS has welcomed more than 2,200 delegates from over 52 countries, creating a vibrant network committed to fostering understanding and collaboration across cultures and faiths.



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## Organised by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

The S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) is a global think tank and professional graduate school of international affairs at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. An autonomous school, RSIS' mission is to be a leading research and graduate teaching institution in strategic and international affairs in the Asia Pacific. With the core functions of research, graduate education, and networking, it produces research on Asia Pacific Security, Multilateralism and Regionalism, Conflict Studies, Non-traditional Security, Cybersecurity, Maritime Security and Terrorism Studies. Its five Research Centres and three Research Programmes, led by the Executive Deputy Chairman, Ambassador Ong Keng Yong, and assisted by the Dean, Professor Kumar Ramakrishna, on the academic side, drive the School's research, education and networking activities.



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## Supported by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, Singapore

The Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) seeks to inspire Singaporeans through the arts and sports, strengthen community bonds, and promote volunteerism and philanthropy. Since its inception in November 2012, MCCY has been actively engaging the arts, heritage, sports, and community and youth sectors. The Ministry aims to bring into sharper focus the efforts to build a more cohesive and vibrant society, and to deepen a sense of identity and belonging to the nation. MCCY works with its stakeholders to create an environment where Singaporeans can pursue their aspirations for a better quality of life and together, and build a gracious and caring society we are proud to call home.



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# ICCS 2025 Overview





# Overview of the International Conference on Cohesive Societies 2025

Our increasingly complex world faces new challenges to cohesion, from shifting identities to rising uncertainties and deepening societal divides. Against this backdrop, ICCS 2025 will explore how multiculturalism, resilience, and dialogue can serve as foundations for harmony in diversity.

The ICCS 2025 conference is built around three thematic pillars — Unpacking Multiculturalism, Navigating Uncertainty, and Forging Societal Resilience — and features a series of plenaries, breakout discussions, and skills workshops. The plenaries will bring together leading thinkers and practitioners to reflect on the evolving dynamics of cohesion, while the breakout sessions will delve deeper into specific issues facing multicultural societies today.

New to ICCS 2025, skills workshops will equip participants with practical toolkits in areas such as futures skills, conflict resolution, and humanitarian action. The Showcase session will highlight real-world examples of how communities are igniting change at the grassroots level. Sharing sessions will also provide opportunities for delegates to discuss best practices and common challenges.

Youth voices will also take centerstage through a special youth-led plenary: “Cohesion Forward” and a dedicated Young Leaders Programme, underscoring the critical role of the next generation in forging resilient, inclusive societies.

# Conference

## Day 1

### 24 June (Tuesday)

Time	Descriptions								
7:00 am	Registration								
9:00 am	<div>ICCS 2025 Opening Ceremony</div> <div><b>Welcome Remarks</b> by Amb. Ong Keng Yong, Executive Deputy Chairman of RSIS</div> <div><b>Opening Keynote Address</b> by President of the Republic of Singapore, Tharman Shanmugaratnam</div> <div><b>Special Presentation</b> Perspectives on Social Cohesion</div>								
10:30 am	Coffee Break								
11:00 am	<div>Plenary #1 Unpacking Multiculturalism</div> <div>Fairmont Ballroom</div>								
11:45 am									
12:30 pm	Lunch								
2:00 pm	<div>Breakouts</div> <div><div>#1 Fairmont</div><div>#2 Olivia</div><div>#3 Sophia</div></div>			<div>Skill Workshops</div> <div><div>I Indiana-Minto Room</div><div>II Morrison Room</div><div>III Moor Room</div><div>IV Mercury-Enterprise Room</div><div>V Hullet Room</div></div>					
3:30 pm	Coffee Break								
	Delegate Networking								
5:00 pm	End of Conference Day 1								
5:30 pm	Optional: Community Exploration								

# Conference Day 2

25 June (Wednesday)

Time	Descriptions								
9:00 am	Welcome by Emcee and Recap								
9:05 am	<b>Keynote Address</b> by the Sultan of Perak and Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong, His Royal Highness Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah								
9:25 am	Plenary #2 Navigating Uncertainty Fairmont Ballroom								
10:10 am									
11:00 am	Coffee Break								
11:30 am	Southeast Asian Social Cohesion Radar Presentation by RSIS Fairmont Ballroom								
11:45 am									
12:30 pm	Lunch								
2:00 pm	Breakouts			Skill Workshops					
	#4 Fairmont	#5 Olivia	#6 Sophia	I Indiana-Minto Room	II Morrison Room	III Moor Room	IV Mercury-Enterprise Room	V Hullet Room	
3:30 pm	Coffee Break								
	Delegate Networking								
5:00 pm	End of Conference Day 2								
5:30 pm	Optional: Community Exploration								

# Conference Day 3

26 June (Thursday)

Time	Descriptions						
9:00 am	Welcome by Emcee and Recap						
9:10 am	Plenary #3 Forging Societal Resilience Fairmont Ballroom						
9:45 am							
10:30 am	Coffee Break						
11:00 am	Showcase Sophia Room	Breakout		Sharing Sessions			
		#7 Fairmont Ballroom	#8 Olivia Room	I Enterprise Room	II Mercury Room	III Indiana Room	IV Minto Room
12:30 pm	Lunch						
2:00 pm	Fireside Chat with Young Community Leaders Fairmont Ballroom						
3:30 pm	<b>Keynote Address</b> by Minister for Law and Second Minister for Home Affairs, Edwin Tong						
4:00 pm	End of Conference Day 3						
6.00 pm	<b>Start of Young Leaders Programme (YLP)</b> [ <i>Only for YLP delegates</i> ] Cultural Networking Evening Atrium Ballroom						

# YLP Day 1 & 2

27 June (Friday)

Time	Descriptions				
9:00 am	Registration and Refreshments				
9.30 am	Forum Theatre Experience “ <b>Breaking Barriers, Bridging Perspectives</b> ” Atrium Ballroom				
1.00 pm	Lunch				
2.00 pm	Breakout				
	<table><tr><td>#1 Minto</td><td>#2 Mercury</td><td>#3 Enterprise</td><td>#4 Atrium Ballroom</td></tr></table>	#1 Minto	#2 Mercury	#3 Enterprise	#4 Atrium Ballroom
#1 Minto	#2 Mercury	#3 Enterprise	#4 Atrium Ballroom		
3.30 pm	Coffee Break				
4:00 pm	Ideation Pitch Atrium Ballroom				
5:15 pm	Heartlands Experience				

28 June (Saturday)

Time	Descriptions
9:00 am	Registration and Refreshments
9:30 am	Applied Learning Workshop <b>"Bridge Insights"</b> Atrium Ballroom
12:00 pm	Reflections and Closing Atrium Ballroom
1:00 pm	Lunch
2:00 pm	End of YLP

# Plenaries Overview



# Plenaries Overview

## Special Presentation – Perspectives on Social Cohesion

Day 1

Fairmont Ballroom

This context-setting segment will establish a shared framework for understanding the complex notion of social cohesion and its role in society. It will explore key questions, including:

How should social cohesion be defined in today's world?

Are there universal principles of social cohesion, or are they shaped by local contexts?

Is social cohesion a fundamental goal of society, or a means to achieve broader societal objectives?

### Speakers



**Dr Catherine Fieschi**

Fellow,  
Robert Schuman Centre,  
European University Institute



**Prof Mike Hardy**

Professor of  
Intercultural Relations,  
Coventry University



**Dr Aaron Maniam**

Fellow of Practice and Director,  
Digital Transformation  
Education,  
Blavatnik School of Government,  
University of Oxford

### Moderator



**Prof Katherine Marshall**

Senior Fellow,  
Berkley Center for Religion,  
Peace & World Affairs

# Plenary #1

## Unpacking Multiculturalism

Day 1

Fairmont Ballroom

This session explores the historical forces and key conditions that have shaped contemporary multiculturalism and social cohesion. It will address the following questions:

How have significant events influenced today's discourse on multiculturalism and cohesion?

What domestic, global, and macro-level conditions have enabled multiculturalism to flourish?

What lessons can be drawn from societies that have successfully managed diversity and from those that have struggled?

### Speakers



**Prof Dr Nasaruddin Umar**

Minister for Religious Affairs,  
Indonesia and Grand Imam of  
Istiqlal Mosque



**Mr Ed Williams**

President, International,  
Edelman



**Prof Colleen Ward**

Professor of Psychology,  
Victoria University of  
Wellington

### Moderator



**Prof Farish Noor**

Professor,  
Universitas Islam Internasional  
Indonesia



# Plenary #2

## Navigating Uncertainty

Day 2

Fairmont Ballroom

This session examines the emerging challenges that threaten multiculturalism and social cohesion, and explores how societies can navigate an increasingly complex future. It will address the following questions:

What emerging social groups, mindsets, and faultlines are shaping the future of cohesion?

What factors are driving the erosion of trust and confidence in diverse societies?

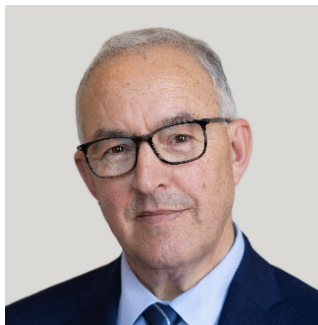
What is at stake in an increasingly fragmented and uncertain environment?

### Speakers



**Mr Peter Ho**

Senior Advisor, Centre for Strategic Futures, and former Head of Civil Service, Singapore



**Mr Ahmed Aboutaleb**

Former Mayor of Rotterdam



**Mr Fadi Chehade**

Founder of EthosCapital

### Moderator



**Prof Kumar Ramkrishna**

Dean, RSIS, NTU

# Plenary #3

## Forging Societal Resilience

Day 3

Fairmont Ballroom

This session explores the policy tools, community initiatives, and societal strategies that can bridge divides and foster resilience, even in the aftermath of conflict. It will address the following questions:

How can we tackle multicultural challenges together and work across different faiths and values?

What political systems or structures can mend faultlines, ease tensions, and promote a more inclusive social compact?

How can we rethink the role of technology to strengthen social connections and cohesion?

### Speakers



**Mr Dinesh Vasu Dash**

Minister of State, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, Singapore



**Mr Ho KwonPing**

Founder and Executive Chairman, Banyan Group



**Venerable Napan Thawornbanjob**

Founding Chair Institute of Buddhist Management for Happiness and Peace (IBHAP) Foundation

### Moderator



**Prof Mona Siddiqui**

Professor of Islamic and Interreligious Studies, Assistant Principal Religion and Society, University of Edinburgh and Jane and Aatos Erkko Chair, Helsinki Collegium.

# Southeast Asian Social Cohesion Radar 2025

Day 2

Fairmont Ballroom

This session presents key findings from the second edition of the Southeast Asian Social Cohesion Radar, building on the inaugural study launched at ICCS 2022. It explores the factors that underpin social cohesion across ASEAN states and highlights commonalities and differences across the region. Key questions include:

What factors hold societies together within ASEAN states?

Which dimensions of social cohesion contribute most to overall cohesion?

What elements of cohesion are shared across ASEAN?

## Speakers



**Dr Leong Chan-Hoong**

Senior Fellow and Head of Social Cohesion Research Programme, RSIS; Principal Investigator for the 2025 SEA Social Cohesion Radar



**Prof Paul Hedges**

Professor of Interreligious Studies, Studies in Inter-religious Relations in Plural Societies Programme, RSIS



**Prof Farish Noor**

Professor Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia

## Moderator



**Mr Warren Fernandez**

Senior Fellow, RSIS, NTU

# Breakout Panel Sessions



ICCS 2025 offers the following breakout sessions that feature in-depth discussions on aspects across the three pillars.

## Unpacking Multiculturalism

### Breakout #1

#### Is history a compass for navigation or a barrier to a more inclusive future?

Day 1, Fairmont Ballroom

People from diverse communities have interacted with one another since human civilisations. The long, shared history however does not always progress to having a better understanding between sectarian groups. In periods of economic uncertainties and rapid changes, some societies have fractured along racial and religious lines, while others have flourished through shared values and mutually agreed ways of life. This breakout will discuss how nations can anchor on common national legacies for the future, and what are the conditions that have enabled multicultural societies to be optimistic and cohesive.

#### Speakers

##### **Ms Lee Huay Leng**

Editor-in-Chief,  
Chinese Media Group, SPH Media

##### **Prof Noorhaidi Hassan**

Rector,  
Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga  
Yogyakarta

#### Moderator

##### **Venerable Chuan Sheng**

Vice-Rector,  
Buddhist College of Singapore

### Breakout #2

#### What conditions promote respect, togetherness and success?

Day 1, Olivia Room

How can we foster a growing sense of togetherness in an increasingly diverse and connected world? What kind of social compact is needed to bring state, institutions, and sectarian groups together? How may we build multi-ethnic cohesion and ensure every community thrive in spite of cultural, religious, and economic differences? The speakers will share their perspectives on creating environments that promote inclusion, trust, and collective well-being.

#### Speakers

##### **Prof John W. Berry**

Professor Emeritus,  
Queen's University, Canada

##### **Rev Indunil Kodithuwakku**

Secretary,  
Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican

#### Moderator

##### **Ms Michelle Tay**

Executive Director,  
Singapore Kindness Movement

# Unpacking Multiculturalism

## Breakout #3

### Stories that inspire multicultural inclusion and shared purpose

Day 1, Sophia Room

Case studies offer powerful lessons on how cohesion can be forged even if the environment is less than conducive. This session highlights practical insights about building bridges between evolving cultures. Their stories showcase some of the best practices in multi-racial and multi-religious societies, and the innovative strategies that have proven effective in uplifting and empowering vulnerable minority groups. Importantly, the sharing highlight how empathy and understanding can be fostered even if people have different convictions and perspectives of what a good society is.

#### Speakers

##### **Dr. Khalil Abdur-Rashid**

Chair of the Board of Religious, Spiritual & Ethical Life and Muslim Chaplain, Harvard University

##### **Prof Harvey Whitehouse**

Director, Centre for the Study of Social Cohesion, University of Oxford

#### Moderator

##### **Mr Mohamed Irshad**

Founder, Roses of Peace

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## Navigating Uncertainty

## Breakout #4

### Fostering a resilient digital ecosystem in a multicultural society

Day 2, Fairmont Ballroom

Rapid technological advancements have given rise to unique challenges and opportunities to strengthening our multi-ethnic and multi-religious fabric. While the advent of artificial intelligence and social media platforms have contributed to cyber harms in the form of misinformation, deep fake, and digital abuse, there is also evidence that its potential can be harnessed to grow a stronger, more resilient society. This session brings together speakers who understand how technology can elevate social trust, foster healthy information ecosystems, and expand future possibilities for all.

#### Speakers

##### **Mr Benjamin Lee**

Head of Commercial and Marketing, Beach House Labs

##### **Mr Andri Kusumo**

Engagement Lead, Trust & Safety, APAC, Google

#### Moderator

##### **Mr Benjamin Ang**

Senior Fellow and Head of Center of Excellence for National Security, RSIS, NTU

# Navigating Uncertainty

## Breakout #5

### Revamping cultural and social institutions to engage new cultural identities

As globalisation and digital connectivity redefine our way of life, new cultural clusters are emerging, and their distinct identities have challenged the dynamics between communities, heritage maintenance, and our sense of belonging to the broader society and country. This session delves into the psychological, cultural, and political factors driving these shifts. The speakers will examine what are new affiliations, the implications to plural societies, and how we engage new groups and navigate cultural sensitivities.

Day 2, Olivia Ballroom

#### Speakers

**Prof Farish Noor**

Professor,  
Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia

**Dr Caroline Ng Tseung-Wong**

Senior Lecturer, University of Canberra

#### Moderator

**Dr Leong Chan-Hoong**

Senior Fellow and Head of Social Cohesion  
Research Programme, RSIS, NTU

## Breakout #6

### Fighting extremism and polarisation together as one people

Extremism and polarisation pose significant threats to social cohesion, eroding trust and dividing communities. This session explores the underlying drivers for these primordial instincts, and as a society, the collective strategies that we can embrace to mitigate against these forces. Experts and practitioners will share insights into tackling divisive narratives, fostering inclusive dialogues, and building resilience against ideological divides.

Day 2, Sophia Room

#### Speakers

**Rabbi Silvina Chemen**

Vice Rector, Abarbanel University  
Institute, and Director,  
Center for Dialogue and Social Action,  
Marshall T. Meyer Latin American  
Rabbinical Seminary

**Prof Mike Hardy CMG OBE FRSA**

Professor of Intercultural Relations,  
Coventry University

#### Moderator

**Prof Paul Hedges**

Professor of Interreligious Studies,  
Studies in Inter-religious Relations  
in Plural Societies Programme, RSIS,  
NTU

# Forging Societal Resilience

## Breakout #7

### Expanding our common space through everyday multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is not just about having different communities coexist together. It is also about appreciating and embracing the ambivalence of diversity, identifying the shared rituals, and agreeing on what should be the way of life for all. This session explores how mutual understanding and respect can be fostered in our mundane routines, and how harmony can be forged with simple gestures and day to day activities. The speakers will flesh out the intricacies of bonding between immigrant and receiving societies in two large European cities, and how social resilience can be strengthened against rising xenophobia.

Day 3, Fairmont Ballroom

#### Speakers

**Prof Katy Bennett**

Professor of Human Geography,  
University of Leicester

**Prof Susanne Wessendorf**

Professor of Social Anthropology,  
Institute of Peace and Security,  
Coventry University

#### Moderator

**Dr Selvaraj Velayutham**

Associate Professor of Sociology,  
School of Communication, Society and Culture,  
Macquarie University

## Breakout #8

### Rebuilding trust and cohesion after social tragedies

Natural and man-made disasters have a long and deep impact on the psychological and communal fabric of a society. This challenge is more acute in a diverse society where the quality of multicultural contact and trust form the bedrock of stability. As such, post-crises management and the successful rebuilding of societies are vital to uplift and maintain cohesive and resilient societies in the face of devastations. This session examines the multifaceted approach to disaster recovery, how to address both immediate and long-term challenges, and discuss the role of the humanitarian sectors, governments, and the public.

Day 3, Olivia Room

#### Speakers

**Datu Mussolini Sinsuat Lidasan**

Executive Director, Al Qalam Institute,  
Ateneo de Davao University

**Mr Rakesh Naidoo MNZM**

Superintendent & National  
Partnerships Manager,  
New Zealand Police

#### Moderator

**Dr Alistair Cook**

Senior Fellow and Coordinator of the  
Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster  
Relief Programme, RSIS



# Skills Workshops



# Skills Workshops

At ICCS 2025, we are excited to offer a series of interactive skills workshops designed to equip participants with the tools to foster understanding, build trust, and navigate the complexities of today's diverse world. These workshops reflect our shared commitment to building societies that are not only resilient but also empathetic, forward-looking, and united in diversity.

Participants will explore critical topics such as:

## **Polarities, Not Polarisation**

Introduction to “polarity thinking”, an approach to divisive issues that crafts “yes-and”, mutually collaborative responses, celebrating societal range and diversity instead of assuming that divisions between communities are inevitable and negative.

Conducted by

**Dr Aaron Maniam**  
Blavatnik School of Government,  
University of Oxford

Day 1 and 2,  
Indiana-Minto Rooms

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## **Futures Skills**

Learn how to apply foresight tools – especially the Futures Triangle – to systematically explore the drivers, constraints, and possible futures of social cohesion in their communities.

Conducted by

**Ms Cheryl Chung**  
Tent Futures

Day 1 and 2,  
Morrison Room

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## **Developing Civic Conversational Skills**

Develop the ability to facilitate impactful conversations between individuals who may have diverse opinions or who may come from different backgrounds.

Conducted by

**Mr Mohamed Imran Mohamed Taib**  
Dialogue Centre

Day 1 and 2,  
Moor Room

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## **Conflict Resolution Fundamental Skills**

Learn the fundamentals of conflict resolution including identifying interests and bargaining positions and facilitating win-win outcomes.

Conducted by

**Ms Wu Ye-Min and Ms Theerada Suphaphong**  
Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

Day 1 and 2,  
Mercury-Enterprise  
Rooms

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## **Humanitarian Compass: Values and Actions in a Turbulent World**

Introduction to the global humanitarian ecosystem, and understand how to act with compassion and solidarity in crises.

Conducted by

**Mr Sahari Ani**  
Singapore Red Cross Academy

Day 1 and 2,  
Hullet Room

# Sharing Perspectives



# Sharing Perspectives: Conversations for a Cohesive Future

ICCS 2025 will feature new sharing sessions that provide a platform for delegates to engage in meaningful discussions on issues that resonate deeply within their communities. Organised thematically and facilitated by a subject expert, the sessions encourage candid conversations, the exchange of diverse perspectives, and the co-creation of actionable ideas.

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## 1.

### Conversing Better: Broadening and Fostering Inclusive Dialogue

**Facilitator**

**Mr Mohamed Imran**

**Mohamed Taib**

Director,  
Dialogue Centre

In a world that is becoming increasingly polarised, the importance of dialogue in bridging differences cannot be understated. This session seeks to explore ways in which dialogue can be made more inclusive. Specifically, delegates are encouraged to discuss how we might engage more communities, such as the non-religious. Delegates can also reflect upon and discuss norms that can facilitate healthy and open dialogue.

**Day 3,**  
Enterprise Room

## 2.

### Enhancing Outreach: Educating and Rallying For Good

**Facilitator**

**Dr William Wan**

Managing Director,  
Fervent Chambers

Good causes can go further and achieve more when it is amplified and awareness is effectively raised. Educating and rallying others can encourage more to participate in the cause and galvanise meaningful change. This session explores the best practices for outreach across platforms and audience segments. By the end of the session, it is hoped that delegates will be inspired to augment their outreach efforts to reach a wider audience and boost the impact of their existing work.

**Day 3,**  
Mercury Room

# 3.

## Moderating Conversations on Social Media

### Facilitator

**Mr Malminderjit Singh**

Chair, Sikh Advisory Board

With the surge of conversations online, especially on social media, there is greater risk of misunderstandings that may extend to inter-group tensions. This session will explore how individuals and organisations can respond effectively to such conversations, especially when encountering differing opinions and viewpoints. Delegates will have the opportunity to discuss strategies and opportunities for moderating uncomfortable interactions online, especially on social media, preventing escalation, and maintaining a respectful environment that minimises harm to communities.

**Day 3,**

Indiana Room

# 4.

## Uplifting Spirits: Recovery, Remembrance and Resilience

### Facilitator

**Mr Hassan Ahmad**

Special Advisor,  
Humanity Matters

While building social cohesion is crucial to preventing conflicts, some challenges, such as volatile geopolitical environments and natural disasters, are beyond our control. Recovery goes beyond providing immediate assistance; it also involves rebuilding and restoring the spirits of affected communities. This can include honouring the memory of those who have suffered or uplifting those affected through arts and sports. This session offers delegates a platform to discuss how uplifting spirits, remembrance, and positive storytelling play vital roles in recovery and social cohesion in difficult times.

**Day 3,**

Minto Room

# Showcase



# Showcase

**Day 3,**  
Sophia Ballroom

ICCS 2025 will feature the conference will feature a showcase segment featuring inspiring community leaders who strengthen social cohesion through education and arts. Speakers will share their initiatives that bridge cultural divides, foster interfaith understanding, and empower grassroots movements.

Featured speakers and their initiatives:

**Project Hills**  
Singapore

Co-founded by Ms Zulayqha Zulkifli who wanted to provide help to underprivileged families. The initiative seeks to educate, empower, and encourage residents to better the lives of those around them.

**Champions for Peace**  
Philippines

Inspired by ICCS, Ms Arizza Ann Nocum founded this project which trains youths to address social and environmental fragilities.

**Projek57**  
Malaysia

Ms Debbie Choa founded this initiative which seeks to inspire youths to take pride in their Malaysian identity and to respect values such as acceptance.

**Yayasan Literatsi Desa Tumbuh**  
Indonesia

Co-Founder Ms Amsa Nadzifah endeavours to use literacy and arts to strengthen communal bonds among children and local communities.

**Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy**  
Indonesia

Leimena Institute Executive Director Mr Matius Ho will share about this program which strengthens individual competencies to improve collaboration among people from different religions.



# Cohesion Forward



# Cohesion Forward

## A Fireside Chat with Youth Leaders

**Day 3,**  
Fairmont Ballroom

This session celebrates the resilience of five young leaders shaping the future of their societies. These changemakers will share their journeys and innovative ideas. Through engaging dialogue, participants will learn how youth leaders address societal challenges and foster unity amidst diversity. This platform highlights the contributions of young people and seeks to inspire future leaders to build cohesive and inclusive communities.

Featuring the following young leaders:

Singapore

**Ms Wendy Maryzeline**

A producer and host of content platform Our Grandfather Story

Malaysia

**Ms Neila Maryam**

General Manager at Architects of Diversity, a youth-led nonprofit addressing inequality from racial and religious divisions in Malaysia

Singapore

**Mr Alex Low**

A Heart of God Church Youth Member and Founder of interfaith.sg, an online playbook for interfaith projects

Tunisia

**Ms Amna Ben Amara**

A researcher and intercultural trainer from Diversity Atlas

USA

**Ms Tarina Ahuja**

Youth advocate and organiser of Sikh American National Youth Council, Young Khalsa Girls, the Greater Good Initiative, and also member of Board of Trustees of the Parliament of World's Religions

**Moderator**

**Dr Aaron Maniam**

Fellow of Practice and Director, Digital Transformation Education, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford

# Community Exploration



The Community Exploration is an immersive programme that gives local and international delegates a firsthand look at Singapore's approach to multicultural and interreligious harmony. By engaging with local communities and exploring Singapore's diverse neighborhoods, delegates will gain invaluable insights into how social cohesion is fostered and how diverse faith and cultural practices enrich life in a vibrant, multicultural society.

Community Exploration 2025 will be held in the evenings of 24 and 25 June 2025 after the day's proceedings, with four concurrent sessions per day.

# Programme Overview

## Day 1

### **Sri Mariamman Temple and Masjid Jamae Chulia**

This segment of the journey will explore two of Singapore's oldest religious landmarks, located in the heart of Chinatown. At Sri Mariamman Temple, Singapore's oldest Hindu temple, visitors will witness the Dravidian architecture and participate in understanding Hindu rituals and traditions. Just a short walk away, Masjid Jamae Chulia, one of the earliest mosques in Singapore, offers a contrast with its Islamic architecture and history of the Muslim community in Singapore.

### **Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre**

At the Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre, the learning journey will uncover the unique Chinese Singaporean culture. Participants will engage with exhibitions that reveal the traditions, practices, and contributions of the Chinese community in Singapore. The centre's programs and activities aim to foster greater appreciation of the Chinese arts and culture that have shaped the nation's multicultural tapestry.

### **Our Tampines Hub**

Our Tampines Hub is a vibrant community and lifestyle destination that reflects the heartland's spirit. The learning journey here will cover the various facilities and initiatives that promote multiculturalism and community bonding. Visitors will experience how the hub serves as a model for future community spaces in fostering social harmony and inclusivity.

### **Kampong Gelam Heritage District**

Kampong Gelam Heritage District is a historical gem that stands as a testament to Singapore's Malay heritage and its early Islamic history. The learning journey through this vibrant district will immerse visitors in the rich tapestry of Malay culture, arts, and traditions. This visit to Kampong Gelam will highlight the importance of preserving cultural heritage while embracing modernity, and how it contributes to the multicultural landscape of Singapore.

## Day 2

### **National Gallery Singapore**

National Gallery Singapore is a treasure trove of Southeast Asian art, housed in two national monuments. The learning journey here will cover the world's largest public collection of Singaporean and Southeast Asian art, spanning the 19th century to present day. Visitors will gain an understanding of the region's rich cultural heritage through the visual arts, and how it has evolved over time.

### **Indian Heritage Centre**

The Indian Heritage Centre offers a deep dive into the rich history and culture of the Indian community in Singapore. Visitors will explore four floors of interactive exhibits, showcasing artifacts and stories from the diaspora's past to the present. The journey will cover the contributions of the Indian community to Singapore's nation-building and provide insights into traditional Indian arts, such as dance and music.

### **One Punggol**

One Punggol is set to be a landmark for community engagement and integration. The learning journey will showcase how this development brings together residents of different backgrounds through its integrated community and lifestyle facilities. Participants will learn about the innovative approaches to community building and the promotion of a kampung spirit in a modern setting.

### **Community Law Centre @ Tian De Temple**

The Community Law Centre at Tian De Temple represents a unique blend of legal aid within a religious institution. Visitors will learn about the temple's history and its role in the community, as well as how the law centre provides accessible legal services and promotes understanding of legal rights among residents. This visit will highlight the collaboration between religious organizations and social services to support the community.

# Young Leaders Programme



Organised in conjunction with the ICCS, the Young Leaders Programme (YLP) is a dynamic platform for the emerging local and international leaders to network, ideate and collaborate on initiatives that strengthen social cohesion. The YLP connects young leaders from Southeast Asia and beyond, fostering a vibrant community where ideas are shared, skills are honed, and confidence is built to address social cohesion challenges. YLP harnesses the energy and creativity of youth to drive practical solutions and contribute meaningfully to building a more cohesive and resilient society.

YLP 2025 will focus on experiential and interactive learning sessions where youths across the world get to exchange unique cultures, share fresh perspectives, and ideate innovative approaches to foster cohesion and harmony. Through working with select youth alumni as part of the YLP 2025 Working Committee and involving YLP delegates as co-creators of the programme, we also support youth leadership and their development.

# YLP Programme Overview

## YLP Day 1

### Cultural Exchange

Join us for a vibrant evening where cultures converge and connect! This unique networking event brings together international delegates for an enriching experience of cultural exchange and showcase.

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## YLP Day 2

### Experiential Learning and Ideation Opportunities

YLP's experiential learning programmes like interactive theatre and YLP Working Comm-led breakout activities immerse delegates in real-world scenarios, turning theory into practice. Through hands-on activities, delegates will gain practical insights and develop critical problem-solving skills.

### YLP Forum Theatre Experience

To encourage insightful participation and reflections, YLP delegates will go through a forum theatre experience, an interactive theatre that allows audience to participate in the performance by suggesting changes in the action or even stepping in as actors to alter the course of the story. Delegates will be engaged in post-forum theatre reflections facilitated via a civic conversation toolkit.

### YLP Breakout Sessions

#### 1. Volunteer Quest: Expedition of Harmony

Be transported into an immersive, narrative-driven environment where you will explore the intersectionality of volunteerism, race, and religion through real-world challenges. In this breakout room activity, you will solve puzzles, decode clues, and brainstorm solutions while deepening your understanding of these complex themes. This experience will challenge you to think critically, act empathetically, and collaborate effectively to create meaningful change.

## **2. “Act” Against Disunity**

In a diverse society like Singapore, maintaining peace and harmony requires active effort and understanding. This dynamic engagement will immerse participants in evolving scenarios where social harmony is disrupted by racial, religious, or community-based tensions. Participants will be assigned roles as key stakeholders—community leaders, government officials, affected individuals, bystanders, and media representatives. As the scenarios unfold with new developments and escalating challenges, you must take strategic actions to de-escalate conflicts, mediate disputes, and implement long-term solutions.

## **3. Grand Challenges: Faith in action scenarios for a more resilient tomorrow**

In an increasingly diverse yet divided world, interfaith engagement is crucial for building cohesive and resilient multicultural societies. This participant-led scenario-based breakout session empowers you to take ownership of interfaith dialogue and action. Through interactive discussions, real-world case studies, and scenario-based problem-solving, you will explore current and future interfaith challenges—from misinformation and religious discrimination to the ethics of AI and faith. You will collaborate to design solutions and commit to tangible actions that foster inclusion, mutual understanding, and social cohesion.

## **4. Soundscapes of Religions in Singapore Experiential Exhibition**

Soundscapes of Religions in Singapore is an experiential exhibition that takes participants through an immersive experience of sounds associated with faith communities in Singapore. The exhibition features guided tours that will incorporate meditation practices, hands-on activity with religious musical instruments, panel explanations on sacred sounds in different religious traditions, and an interactive performance featuring a cultural performance group where participants are welcomed to join in the fun!

Participating partners include:  
Dialogue Centre, Singapore



## YLP Ideation Pitch

A slot is already carved out for delegates to transform inspiration into action through our brainstorming session where delegates will get to collaborate in teams, share diverse perspectives on fostering harmony and develop practical, innovative ideas for community engagement and create actionable plans for cultural bridge-building.

## YLP Heartlands Experience

Experience Singapore's multicultural tapestry through curated heritage trails and learning journeys, where delegates navigate through vibrant heartlands to witness how shared spaces foster community bonds and celebrate our multicultural identity. YLP Heartlands Experience will be held in the evening of 27 June 2025 after the day's proceedings, with 5 concurrent sessions.

### 1. Wok and Walk: Uncovering Chinatown's Hidden Tales

Ready to unlock the secrets of Chinatown? Embark on an epic adventure to the heart of the district and uncover its rich multicultural elements, from architectural wonders to hidden food treasures! Be part of a mission to level up your cultural experience by exploring the rich stories of Chinese settlers while immersing yourself in Chinatown's vibrancy that makes it so unique.

### 2. HELL-O: To hell and beyond!

Ever wondered what it was like to set foot in Hell's Nether Realms? Leave the mortal world behind as we take you on an epic expedition to uncover the courts of hell! This mind-bending journey is like no other as you learn what different cultures believe about the afterlife – from spirit worlds and graphic descriptions of the divine. Think you're up for this underworldly adventure? Cross over and join us!

### 3. Tekk-a Cultural Trip: Where every corner carries a tale

Interested in uncovering the captivating charm of Little India? Now's your chance to power up your senses with a flavourful cultural expedition, where you can immerse yourself in the bustling atmosphere and explore charming traditional shops and savour authentic local delights. An unforgettable blend of culture, history, and local life awaits as Little India's vibrant flavours come to life!

#### **4. Gelam-orous Art and Culture: The hippest Kampung story in town**

Embark on a magical adventure through Kampung Gelam, where traditional heritage meets modern vibrancy! Level up your cultural adventure by uncovering the beauty and intrigue of Singapore's historic Malay-Muslim quarter, from traditional heritage shophouses to legendary Middle Eastern and Malay flavours.

#### **5. Kueh-munity Spirit: Sweet Heritage Stories**

Hop on our journey through the charming enclaves of Katong and Joo Chiat, where the rich traditions of straits-born culture come alive! Unlock the neighbourhood's hidden treasures by exploring the unique blend of Chinese, Malay and European influences on traditional crafts and vibrant architectures unique to the Peranakan and Eurasian enclave. Don't miss this chance to level up your cultural adventure and try some local kuehs (bite-sized snacks/desserts) while you're there!

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### **YLP Day 3**

This interactive session synthesises insights from ICCS main conference and YLP sessions. Facilitated by USC-CRCC, this closing workshop will help bridge the gap between knowledge & skillsets gleaned across the whole conference and actual practices, helping YLP delegates connect classroom concepts with real-world applications.

Participating partners include:  
Center for Religion and Civic Culture, University of Southern California, United States of America

# Survey Form

## **We Value Your Feedback!**

Help us make future conferences even better.

### **Complete the ICCS 2025 Evaluation Survey**

Your feedback helps us understand what worked well and where we can improve – from content and speakers to logistics and delegate experience.

### **Scan the QR Code**

to access the survey.



### **Takes less than 5 minutes**

- Fully anonymous
- Shape the future of ICCS

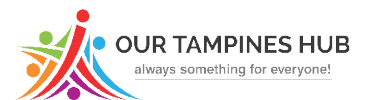
Thank you for being a part of ICCS 2025!

Together, let's build stronger, more cohesive societies.

If you have other feedback to provide,  
you may contact [iccs-mail@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:iccs-mail@ntu.edu.sg)

# In Appreciation

## Supporting Partners



# Visit Singapore



## Sentosa Island

Before it was known as Sentosa, this island just off Singapore's southern coast was a British military fortress. After the Japanese Occupation in World War II, Singapore returned to British rule, and the island was renamed "Sentosa" which means "peace and tranquility" in Malay.

Over the course of its remarkable history, Sentosa has transformed into a beloved island resort, best known for its tropical beaches, luxurious hotels and thrilling attractions. Whether you're looking for an adrenaline rush or a day of relaxing in the sun, Sentosa is bound to enchant and delight.

# Visit Singapore



## Mandai Wildlife Reserve

Mandai Wildlife Reserve is home to a remarkable collection of world-class wildlife parks, including the Singapore Zoo, Bird Paradise, Night Safari, River Wonders and Rainforest Wild Asia.

Together, these five parks are seamlessly integrated to offer immersive nature-based experiences, lush green spaces, and an eco-friendly resort, creating a haven where people and wildlife can connect.

Driven by a vision of thriving wildlife and sustainable communities, Mandai Wildlife Reserve is dedicated to inspiring a deeper appreciation for nature, promoting sustainable living, and supporting vital conservation efforts to protect wildlife and their habitats for generations to come.



# Visit Singapore



## Gardens by the Bay

It's hard to miss the sprawling 101-hectare lot right by the water in Marina Bay. Two huge futuristic structures rise out of the greenery at Gardens by the Bay, which was designed with environmental sustainability in mind.

These are the Flower Dome and the Cloud Forest cooled conservatories, which was listed in the 2015 Guinness World Records as the world's largest glass greenhouse. The freestanding unsupported glass roofs enclose expansive spaces, unmarred by any pillar or column.

Besides ultra-modern design, the conservatories also use cutting-edge technologies for better energy efficiency.

# Visit Singapore



## **National Gallery Singapore**

The latest jewel in Singapore's art crown, the National Gallery Singapore is a visual arts institution housing an unparalleled collection of modern Singapore and Southeast Asian art.

Fittingly located in the heart of the Civic District, the Gallery is housed in the City Hall and the former Supreme Court — two iconic buildings that have played a monumental role in Singapore's history. Utmost care was taken to ensure that preservation guidelines for these two national monuments were being upheld even as they were being remodelled into a state-of-the-art museum for the public.



# Annex – Speaker Biographies

## Special Presentation: Perspectives on Social Cohesion



**Dr Catherine Fieschi**

Fellow  
Robert Schuman Centre,  
European University Institute

Catherine Fieschi is a leading European politics expert and global analyst. Her main focus is on the rise of populist and authoritarian politics in advanced democracies and the social and political pressures such politics inflict on diverse societies. She is a longstanding adviser to progressive political leaders and campaigns across the globe.

A Senior Fellow at the Robert Schuman Centre of the European University in Florence, Europe's foremost policy and research institute, Catherine is also a Senior Advisor to the London-based geo-political advisory firm, Macro Advisory Partners.

The founder of Counterpoint, a UK-based think tank that provided governments, businesses, and NGOs around the world with strategic insights on how to manage new forms of social and political risk, she served as its Executive Director until April 2023. Previously, she served as director of the UK's leading think tank Demos, and as Director of Research at the British Council. Widely published in academia and beyond, Catherine is a regular political and social commentator (FT, The Guardian, Politico, BBC, CNN, etc). She is the author of, most recently, *Populocracy: The Tyranny of Authenticity and the Rise of Populism* (2019); and is currently writing a book on women and the far right.

Catherine is a member of the OECD's Expert Group on Foresight and is on the International Board of the National Centre for Social Research in the UK.

A native speaker of French, Italian and English, Catherine holds a PhD in Comparative Politics from McGill University in Canada and lives in Paris.



**Prof Mike Hardy**  
**CMG OBE FRSA**

Professor of Intercultural  
Relations  
Coventry University

Mike Hardy is Professor of Intercultural Relations and founding Director of the Centre for Peace and Security at Coventry University and adjunct Professor of Leadership at ICB LSRP Indonesia. He is Board Chair of the International Leadership Association, ([www.ilaglobalnetwork.org](http://www.ilaglobalnetwork.org)) and a member of the International Advisory Board of ICESCO. His recent passion has been the development of Coventry's **Public Leadership Lab**, an innovation and experience-sharing process pointed at positive peacebuilding. His current work is based on extended conversations with global influencers: *Leading and Learning in a Polycrisis World*.

Mike trained as economist, and was a Fulbright Scholar in California before leading Economics Departments at both Leeds and Lancashire Universities in the UK.

From 1995-2011, Mike was a UK diplomat posted in Cairo, Ramallah and Jakarta. Honoured in 2001, awarded the OBE for his peace-building work in the Middle East, and appointed a UK Companion of Honour of St Michael and St George (CMG) in 2010 for his work globally in Intercultural Dialogue. In 2002, he was recognised by the United Nations for work with civil society in the Levant, and in 2024 by the Government of Indonesia, PIN EMAS, for his support to the development of Indonesia's Counter Terrorism Strategy.



**Dr Aaron Maniam**

Fellow of Practice  
and Director, Digital  
Transformation Education,  
Blavatnik School of  
Government,  
University of Oxford

Aaron's work at the Blavatnik School focuses on issues connecting technology, public policy and public administration. He teaches on the School's Master of Public Policy and executive education programmes, and convenes its digital "thematic cluster", bringing together scholarship and practice on digital issues. He co-chairs the World Economic Forum's Global Future Council on the Future of Technology Policy and is a member of the OECD's Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence (AI) Futures.

Previously a policymaker in the Singapore government, he was most recently Deputy Secretary (Industry & International) at the Singapore Ministry of Communications & Information, overseeing the ministry's work in the digital economy, digital literacy and inclusion, and digital diplomacy - with a concurrent cross-government role coordinating Singapore's strategy in global branding, soft power and public diplomacy. Before that, he served in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Trade & Industry, the Public Service Division and Civil Service College. In particular, he was the founding Head of the Centre for Strategic Futures, currently under the Prime Minister's Office Strategy Group, and Institute Director for the Institute of Public Sector Leadership. In both roles, he was involved in conceptualising, facilitating, delivering and sustaining cross-government strategy, visioning, leadership development and organisational development efforts, as well as sharing Singapore's work with other countries in capability-building programmes.

He was recognised by the World Economic Forum as a Young Global Leader in 2013, by the Asia Society as an Asia 21 Young Leader in 2007, and is a Fellow of the Royal Society for the encouragement of the Arts, Manufacture and Commerce (FRSA).



**Prof Katherine Marshall**  
**[Moderator]**

Senior Fellow  
Berkley Center for Religion,  
Peace and World Affairs

Professor Marshall also serves as the executive director of the World Faiths Development Dialogue, an NGO that works to enhance bridges between different sectors and institutions. As Vice President of the G20 Interfaith Association, she devotes much attention to supporting positive engagement on global agendas. She serves on the boards of NGOs and organisations, including AVINA Americas, the International Shinto Foundation, and the International Anti-Corruption Conference. She spent several years as a core group member of the Council of 100, a World Economic Forum initiative to advance understanding between the Islamic world and the West. She is a member of the World Economic Forum – Global Future Council in Faith in Action. She is a strong supporter of ICCS, having spoken at both editions in 2019 and 2022.

# Plenary #1: Unpacking Multiculturalism



**Prof Dr Nasaruddin Umar**

Minister for Religious  
Affairs, Indonesia and  
Grand Imam of Istiqlal  
Mosque

Prof. Dr. Nasaruddin Umar, was appointed Minister of Religious Affairs on October 21, 2024. He is presently the Grand Imam of the Istiqlal Mosque of Jakarta and Professor at the State Islamic University of Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta.



**Mr Ed Williams**

President, International,  
Edelman

Ed is President, International at Edelman, the world's largest communications firm, overseeing the firm's 28-country markets across Latin America, Canada, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia Pacific. He specializes in strategic communications with a focus on geopolitical issues, advising institutional leaders in both the private and public sectors.

Active in civil society, Ed is an executive board member of the Institute of Strategic Dialogue (ISD), a global leader in combating extremism, hate, and disinformation through research and policy solutions. He also serves on the US Board of the Aspen Institute, chairs Aspen UK, and is a trustee of the Woolf Institute and the Royal College of Art.

Before joining Edelman, Ed sat on the management board of the BBC as Communications Director and was Group Corporate Affairs Director at Reuters, where he also served on the management board. He began his career in television journalism as a News Editor and Producer, covering significant events, including the Northern Ireland Troubles.

He has been a Visiting Fellow at The Institute of Management Studies, is an Honorary Fellow of Goldsmiths University and a graduate of Harvard Business School's AMP programme. He is a frequent speaker at global events, including the World Economic Forum, and regularly anchors Edelman's key IP events, such as the Edelman Trust Barometer launch.



**Prof Colleen Ward**

Professor of  
Cross-cultural Psychology  
Victoria University of  
Wellington

Colleen Ward is a Professor of Cross-cultural Psychology and Founding Director of the Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. She is also concurrently an Honorary Professor at the University of Durham, England. Internationally recognised as a leading expert on psychological aspects of intercultural contact and the lead author of *The Psychology of Culture Shock*, Professor Ward is a recipient of the Royal Society of New Zealand's Te Rangi Hiroa medal in recognition of her contribution to psychological research on immigration, acculturation, and intercultural relations and its application for social good. In New Zealand she has provided consultancy and advice to various government ministries and NGOs on these issues and is currently leading a project on multiculturalism and indigeneity funded by a Royal Society Marsden grant. Professor Ward has also served as President of the International Association for Cross-cultural Psychology, the International Academy for Intercultural Research and the Asian Association of Social Psychology. In addition, she was Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Intercultural Relations.

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**Prof Farish A. Noor**  
**[Moderator]**

Professor  
Universitas Islam  
Internasional Indonesia

Prof Farish A. Noor is a political scientist and historian whose work focuses on colonial Southeast Asia. Currently based at the Faculty of Social Science (FOSS), Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII), he has taught at several universities in Southeast Asia and his recent works include *The Long Shadow of the 19th Century: Critical Essays on Colonial Orientalism in Southeast Asia* (Kuala Lumpur: Matahari Books, 2021), *Menuju Jurang Pemisah: Ras, Kuasa, dan Kekerasan Kolonial di Hindia Belanda, 1808-1830* (With Peter Carey, Jakarta: KPG Gramedia Publishers, 2021); *Data-Collecting in 19th Century Colonial Southeast Asia: Framing the Other* (Amsterdam University Press, 2020); *America's Encounters with Southeast Asia 1800-1900: Before the Pivot* (Amsterdam University Press, 2018); *The Discursive Construction of Southeast Asia in the Discourse of 19th Century Colonial-Capitalism* (Amsterdam University Press, 2016); and *The Malaysian Islamic Party 1951-2013: Islamism in a Mottled Nation* (Amsterdam University Press, 2014).

## Plenary #2: Navigating Uncertainty



**Mr Peter Ho**

Senior Advisor  
Centre for Strategic Futures

Peter Ho is the Senior Advisor to the Centre for Strategic Futures and a Senior Fellow of the Civil Service College.

He also serves as Chairman of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), Chairman of the Campus for Research Excellence and Technological Enterprise (CREATE) Governing Council, Chairman of the Office for Space Technology & Industry (OSTIn) Board, Chairman of PRECision Health Research, Singapore (PRECISE) Board Oversight Committee, Chairman of the National Gallery Singapore (NGS), and Chairman of the Institute for Intelligent Functional Materials (I-FIM) Governing Board. He is also a member of the Board of Governors of the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), and of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP).

When he retired from the Singapore Administrative Service in 2010 after a career in the Public Service stretching more than 34 years, he was Head, Civil Service, concurrent with his other appointments of Permanent Secretary (Foreign Affairs), Permanent Secretary (National Security & Intelligence Coordination), and Permanent Secretary (Special Duties) in the Prime Minister's Office. Before that, he was Permanent Secretary (Defence). He was also the inaugural Chairman of the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore.



**Mr Ahmed Aboutaleb**

Former Mayor of Rotterdam

Over the years, Ahmed Aboutaleb has established himself as a dedicated public servant who strives to create a city — and a society — where everyone can thrive regardless of their background. His tenure in Rotterdam has been marked by firm yet empathetic leadership: he is known for promoting social cohesion and encouraging dialogue between diverse groups.

Born in Beni Sidel, in the Moroccan province of Nador, he moved to the Netherlands at the age of sixteen. He settled in The Hague, where he continued his education and earned an engineering degree in electrical engineering with a specialisation in telecommunications. Following his studies, he embarked on a career in journalism, working with renowned Dutch media outlets such as NOS and RTL. This period provided him with invaluable insights into Dutch society's complexities and laid the groundwork for his future in public service.

In the early 2000s, Aboutaleb decided to step into public service. He joined the Labour Party (PvdA) and served as an alderman in the city of Amsterdam from 2004 to 2007, focusing on issues like education and youth policy. Recognized for his ability to bridge cultural divides, he was appointed State Secretary for Social Affairs and Employment in the fourth Balkenende cabinet in 2007. During this time, he worked on policies to improve the social integration and economic participation of marginalised communities.

In 2009, Aboutaleb made history as the first mayor of a major European city with a Moroccan immigrant background. His leadership in Rotterdam has brought him widespread national and international acclaim. In 2021, he was honored with the title of "Best Mayor in the World". Shortly before stepping down, he was appointed Commander of the Order of Orange-Nassau and received the prestigious Johan van Oldenbarnevelt Medal, celebrating his unwavering dedication to the city and its residents.

Ahmed Aboutaleb is a highly regarded and internationally respected leader, distinguished by his decisive and inclusive approach to governance. His ability to unite diverse communities and tackle complex challenges with empathy and foresight has firmly established him as one of the world's most respected and influential leaders.



**Mr Fadi Chehade**  
Founder &  
Managing Partner  
Ethos Capital

Fadi Chehade is an Internet entrepreneur who founded, grew, and sold numerous information services companies including Connectica, a digital content management company acquired by Ingram Micro (IM) in 1994; RosettaNet, a B-to-B eCommerce standards organization whose founding members included Microsoft (MSFT), IBM (IBM), Hewlett Packard (HPE), SAP Software (SAP SE), Nokia (NOK), and Oracle (ORCL) – later acquired by GSI in 2000; Viacore, a supply chain integration platform purchased by IBM (IBM) in 2006; and Vocado, a provider of cloud-based transaction processing software for the education industry acquired by Oracle (ORCL) in 2017.

Fadi also held corporate posts at AT&T (T), Ingram Micro (IM), and IBM (IBM), where as General Manager, he led the growth of IBM's Global Technology Services in the Middle East and Africa. He served as the President and CEO of ICANN from 2012 to 2016, the international body governing the Internet's key resources and policies. Additionally, Fadi was senior advisor to Klaus Schwab, the Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, and a member of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation. Recently, Carnegie Corporation of New York honored Fadi as a 2020 Great Immigrant.

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**Prof Kumar Ramakrishna**  
**[Moderator]**  
Dean, S. Rajaratnam School  
of International Studies

Kumar Ramakrishna is Professor of National Security Studies, Provost's Chair in National Security Studies, Dean of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), as well as Research Adviser to the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, at RSIS. Prior to his current appointments, he was Head, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (2020-2022), Head, Centre of Excellence for National Security (2006-2015) and Head, National Security Studies Programme (2016 to 2020). He was also Associate Dean for Policy Studies (2020 to 2022).

A historian by background, Professor Ramakrishna has been a frequent speaker on counter-terrorism before local and international audiences, a regular media commentator on counter-terrorism, and an established author in numerous internationally refereed journals. His first book, *Emergency Propaganda: The Winning of Malayan Hearts and Minds 1948-1958* (2002) was described by the *International History Review* as "required reading for historians of Malaya, and for those whose task is to counter insurgents, guerrillas, and terrorists". His second major book, *Radical Pathways: Understanding Muslim Radicalisation in Indonesia* (2009) was featured as one of the top 150 books on terrorism and counterterrorism in the respected journal *Perspectives on Terrorism*, which identified Professor Ramakrishna as "one of Southeast Asia's leading counterterrorism experts". His recent research has focused on understanding, preventing and countering violent extremism in Southeast Asia. His latest book is *Extremist Islam: Recognition and Response in Southeast Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).



## Plenary #3: Forging Societal Resilience



**Mr Dinesh Vasu Dash**

Minister of State,  
Ministry of Culture,  
Community and Youth,  
Singapore

Dinesh Vasu Dash is Minister of State in the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and the Ministry of Manpower. He also serves as Mayor of South East District.

Before entering politics, Mr Dinesh was Chief Executive Officer of the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC). There, he led efforts to expand community-based eldercare, grow the care sector, and launch national campaigns against ageism.

Earlier, at the Ministry of Health, he led the Crisis Strategy and Operations Group. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he oversaw national operations in contact tracing, testing, quarantine, isolation, treatment facilities, and home recovery. He led Singapore's vaccination strategy, which helped the country reach one of the world's highest rates of vaccination and boosters. He also shaped policy on infectious disease control, medical readiness, and emergency response. For his service, he received the Public Service Star (COVID-19) from the President of Singapore in 2023.

Active in the community, he has volunteered with senior care charities and served on various national and community boards. These include the School Advisory Committee, the Advisory Council on Community Relations in Defence (ACCORD), the executive committee of SINDA, and the Hindu Advisory Board.



**Mr Ho KwonPing**

Founder and Executive  
Chairman  
Banyan Group

Mr Ho KwonPing is the Founder and Executive Chairman of Banyan Group and Laguna Resorts and Hotels, and Executive Chairman of Thai Wah Public Company. All three family-owned companies are listed in Singapore and Thailand.

He was the founding Chairman of Singapore Management University (SMU) and has chaired Singapore Power and MediaCorp Singapore. He has also served on the boards of Standard Chartered Bank, Diageo, Singapore Airlines, and GIC.

Among various awards, Mr Ho has received the London Business School Entrepreneurship Award; CEO of the Year at the Singapore Corporate Awards; CNBC Travel Business Leader Award; Distinguished Alumnus Award from the National University of Singapore; and Lifetime Achievement Awards from the American Creativity Association, China Hotel Investment Summit and Australia Hotel Investment Summit. Honoured for his contributions and accomplishments in the hotel industry in the Asia Pacific region and globally, Mr Ho is the only two-time recipient of Hotel Investment Conference Asia Pacific HICAP's Innovation Award (2003) and Lifetime Achievement Award (2019) in its 30-year existence. Most recently, Mr Ho received the prestigious Outstanding Contribution award at AHEAD Asia 2024.

For his services to the country, he has received the Meritorious Service Medal and Distinguished Service Order from the Singapore Government. Mr Ho has also been conferred honorary doctorates by Johnson & Wales University, Hong Kong Poly University, and Singapore Management University.



**Venerable Napan Thawornbanjob**

Founding Chair  
Institute of Buddhist  
Management for  
Happiness and Peace  
(IBHAP) Foundation

Venerable Napan Thawornbanjob is a Buddhist monk serving as an Assistant Abbot of Wat Saket (The Golden Mount Temple), Founding Chair of the Institute of Buddhist Management for Happiness and Peace (IBHAP) Foundation, and Secretary-General of Religions for Peace, Thailand. Through his initiative, Buddhism for SDGs, he has leveraged faith-based values to advance the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), driving positive change and fostering peace and development at community, national, regional, and global levels.

His notable work spans peacebuilding, interreligious dialogue, environmental sustainability, education, and capacity building. With extensive experience in interreligious dialogue, peacebuilding and development, he has gained global recognition and participated in many significant events, such as the UN Meeting on Implementation of the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crime (Fez Plan of Action), The first Vesak Day Ceremony in the European Parliament, the Interfaith G20 Forum, COP16 and COP29.

He is also affiliated with various international organisations, serving as a Member of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation Reference Group, a Member of International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), KAICIID Fellow and a Steering committees of the Asia Working Group of The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. He also works collaboratively with national organisations, for examples, the training programme "Human Rights for Healer Monks (HRHM)" in collaboration with National Human Rights Commission of Thailand. In recognition of his long-standing dedication to peace and development, he was honored with the Chevening Alumni Award in 2024, among other accolades.



**Prof Mona Siddiqui OBE**  
**[Moderator]**

Professor of Islamic and  
Interreligious Studies &  
Assistant Principal for  
Religion and Society  
University of Edinburgh

Professor Mona Siddiqui OBE, is Assistant Principal for Religion and Society at the University of Edinburgh. She is known internationally as a public intellectual and as a regular commentator in the media, known for her contributions to the BBC's *Thought for the Day* and *The Moral Maze*. She has published widely in Islamic law, ethics and pluralism and in the field of Christian-Muslim relations. She is a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Professor Siddiqui serves as an advisor to the Singapore College of Islamic Studies.



## Launch of Southeast Asian Social Cohesion Radar 2025



### **Dr Leong Chan-Hoong**

Senior Fellow and Head  
Social Cohesion Research  
Programme  
S. Rajaratnam School of  
International Studies

Dr Leong Chan-Hoong is Senior Fellow and Head of Social Cohesion Research Programme, at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University. His research interests include migration and intercultural adaptation, inter-ethnic relations, national narratives, and human-environment interactions. Dr Leong is a Fellow and board member of the International Academy for Intercultural Research (IAIR) and of the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) Asia Pacific Council. He is the Committee Chair for the IAIR's Rae and Dan Landis Outstanding Dissertation Award and the WAPOR's Janet A Harkness Award; both awards serve to recognise and promote distinguished achievements among emerging scholars on intercultural research. Dr Leong also sits on the International Advisory Board at the Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research in Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. He has served as Consulting Editor and Special Issue Editor for the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* (IJIR), *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, and *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion: An International Journal*. According to a bibliometric analysis published in 2023 IJIR, Dr Leong is one of the top 10 global scholars whose research on acculturation and migration were cited extensively.

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### **Prof Paul Hedges**

Professor of Interreligious  
Studies, Studies in Inter-  
religious Relations in Plural  
Societies (SRP) Programme  
S. Rajaratnam School of  
International Studies

Dr Paul Hedges is a Life Member at Clare Hall, University of Cambridge, UK, and Professor of Interreligious Studies, and Associate Dean (Scholarly Ecosystems), at RSIS, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He has taught in Asia, Europe, and North America. A leading global scholar in interreligious studies whose work is regularly cited and employed, he researches, teaches, and publishes in interreligious studies, theory and method in the study of religion, contemporary global Christian theologies, prejudice studies, and decolonising academia. He has worked with media, NGOs, faith groups, and governments. He has published fifteen books and over ninety scholarly papers. His most recent book is *Christian Polytheism? Polydox Theologies of Multi-devotional and Decolonial Praxis* (Routledge 2025).

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### **Dr Farish A. Noor**

Professor  
Universitas Islam  
Internasional Indonesia

Prof Farish A. Noor is a political scientist and historian whose work focuses on colonial Southeast Asia. Currently based at the Faculty of Social Science (FOSS), Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII), he has taught at several universities in Southeast Asia and his recent works include *The Long Shadow of the 19th Century: Critical Essays on Colonial Orientalism in Southeast Asia* (Kuala Lumpur: Matahari Books, 2021), *Menuju Jurang Pemisah: Ras, Kuasa, dan Kekerasan Kolonial di Hindia Belanda, 1808-1830* (With Peter Carey, Jakarta: KPG Gramedia Publishers, 2021); *Data-Collecting in 19th Century Colonial Southeast Asia: Framing the Other* (Amsterdam University Press, 2020); *America's Encounters with Southeast Asia 1800-1900: Before the Pivot* (Amsterdam University Press, 2018); *The Discursive Construction of Southeast Asia in the Discourse of 19th Century Colonial-Capitalism* (Amsterdam University Press, 2016); and *The Malaysian Islamic Party 1951-2013: Islamism in a Mottled Nation* (Amsterdam University Press, 2014).



**Mr Warren Fernandez**  
**[Moderator]**

Senior Fellow and Head of  
National Security Studies  
Programme  
Editor, RSIS Publications  
S. Rajaratnam School of  
International Studies

Warren Fernandez is a Senior Fellow at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and concurrently serves as Director of Industry Engagement at the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

With over three decades of experience in the news, media, and communications sectors, Warren has held key leadership roles, including Editor-in-Chief of the English/Malay/Tamil Media Group at SPH Media and Editor of The Straits Times.

Before joining RSIS, he was the Chief Executive Officer for Edelman (Asia Pacific), where he developed a deep understanding of the critical importance of trust in an evolving global landscape. He brings first-hand experience in navigating the transformation of the media ecosystem and the challenges of digital disruption.

Beyond his professional career, Warren is an active contributor to the community. He serves as a Board Member of the National Arts Council and the National Library Board, and in 2023, he was appointed a Member of the Public Service Commission by the President of Singapore. He has also previously served as President of the World Editors Forum, Chairman of the Asia News Network, and Chairman of The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund.

Warren holds a First-Class Honours degree in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics from Oxford University and a Master's in Public Administration from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

## Breakout #1: Is history a compass for navigation or a barrier to a more inclusive future?



**Lee Huay Leng**

Editor-in-Chief  
Chinese Media Group  
SPH Media

Huay Leng is the Editor-in-Chief for the Chinese Media Group in SPH Media. She is responsible for Lianhe Zaobao and its global digital platform zaobao.com, the evening daily Shin Min Daily News, a stable of student publications, a digital channel for young audience called HeyKaki and an English language e-magazine called ThinkChina.sg.

Huay Leng joined SPH in 1994 and held numerous roles as a journalist, Hong Kong Correspondent, Beijing Bureau Chief, China Editor, News Editor and Deputy Editor of Lianhe Zaobao. She helmed the evening daily Lianhe Wanbao from 2014-2016. In December 2016, she was appointed Head of the Chinese Media Group and was re-designated to her current role with the formation of SPH Media Trust in 2021.

Huay Leng currently serves as a member of the Founders' Memorial Committee, a board director of The Esplanade Co Ltd and Business China, and a board member of the Lee Kuan Yew Fund for Bilingualism. In 2025, she was appointed as a Non-Executive and Independent Director of Wilmar International Limited. She received the Hsing Yun Journalism Award (Outstanding Achievement) in 2019.

Huay Leng graduated with an honours degree in Chinese Studies from the National University of Singapore and holds a Master of Arts degree in Southeast Asian Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. She was an Asian Fellow at Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, Harvard Kennedy School (2010-2011), and a Singapore Lien fellow of Lien Ying Chow Legacy Fellowship (2014).



**Prof Dr Noorhaidi Hasan**

Rector  
Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic  
University, Yogyakarta

Noorhaidi Hasan, born on December 7, 1971, in Amuntai, Indonesia, is a distinguished scholar of Islam and politics. He currently serves as Rector of Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University (UIN Sunan Kalijaga) Yogyakarta. Previously, he held key leadership positions, including Dean of the Faculty of Sharia and Law, Director of the Graduate School at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, and Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies at the Indonesian International Islamic University (UIII). His research covers a broad spectrum, including Salafism, Islamic radicalism, identity politics, the Muslim middle class, religious diversity management, and youth studies.

He earned his PhD from Utrecht University (2005), MPhil from the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (2000), and MA from Leiden University (1999), all with cum laude distinctions. Following his PhD, he enriched his academic experience through postdoctoral and research fellowships at the National University of Singapore, KITLV Leiden, Nanyang Technological University, and Clingendael Den Haag. Additionally, he has been a visiting professor at EHESS Paris, Radboud University Nijmegen, and the Alwaleed Centre for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World at the University of Edinburgh, among others.

A prolific academic, Noorhaidi has contributed extensively to international journals and scholarly publications. His outstanding contributions earned him the Best Lecturer award from Indonesia's Minister of Religion in 2015. He has also led numerous international research projects in collaboration with institutions such as Göttingen University, Radboud University, the Norwegian Center for Human Rights, and the Berkley Center at Georgetown University. In recognition of his scholarly achievements, he was appointed a member of the Indonesian Academy of Sciences (AIPI) in 2021.

Despite his significant administrative responsibilities, Noorhaidi remains deeply engaged in advancing Islamic studies, fostering research, and promoting international academic collaboration, solidifying his role as a leading figure in the field.



**Venerable Chuan Sheng**  
**[Moderator]**

Chair of Education  
Committee, Singapore  
Buddhist Federation

Venerable Chuan Sheng is also Vice-Rector (Academic Affairs) of the Buddhist College of Singapore. He obtained his BA (Honours) in History from the National University of Singapore (NUS) and PhD in History and East Asian Languages from Harvard University. He was an academic staff of NUS for 26 years, before receiving his higher ordination as a Buddhist monk in Taiwan in 2013. He trains under his ordination master, Venerable Kwang Sheng, at Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery.

## Breakout #2: What conditions promote respect, togetherness and success



**Prof John Berry**

Professor Emeritus of  
Psychology  
Queen's University

John W. Berry is Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Queen's University, Canada. He graduated (BA) from Sir George Williams University in 1963, and from the University of Edinburgh (PhD, 1966). He received Honorary Doctorates from the University of Athens, the Université de Geneve and the University of Tallinn.

He is a Fellow of numerous academic societies (IACCP, IAAP, IAIR, CPA) and the Royal Society of Canada. He has published over 40 books and over 300 articles and chapters in the areas of cross-cultural, intercultural, social and cognitive psychology with various colleagues. In addition to the text book (*Cross-Cultural Psychology: Research and Applications*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, 2002, 2011), his most recent books are: Sam & Berry (eds) (2016). *Cambridge handbook of acculturation psychology*, 2nd edition), Cambridge ; Sam & Berry (eds) (2016). *Cross-cultural psychology* (4 volumes), Routledge; Mishra & Berry (2017). *Ecology, culture and human development: Lessons for Adivasi Education* New Delhi: Sage; Berry (ed.) (2017) *Mutual intercultural relations*, Cambridge; and Berry, (2018), *Acculturation: A personal journey across cultures*, Cambridge.



**Rev. Indunil Janakaratne  
Kodithuwakku  
Kankanamalage**

Secretary  
Dicastery for Interreligious  
Dialogue

Fr. Indunil Janakaratne Kodithuwakku Kankanamalage, born in Sri Lanka, serves as the Secretary of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue in the Vatican. He was ordained as a priest in 2000 for the diocese of Badulla. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Colombo in 1994 and later obtained a Doctorate in Missiology from the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome in 2007.

He joined the Faculty of the Pontifical Urbaniana University Rome as a Lecturer of Missiology. In 2012, Pope Benedict XVI appointed him Under-Secretary of the then Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. In 2019 Pope Francis promoted him to Secretary of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue.



**Ms Michelle Tay  
[Moderator]**

Executive Director  
Singapore Kindness  
Movement

Michelle Tay is the Executive Director of the Singapore Kindness Movement, a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering a kinder and more gracious society.

She holds a Master's in Communication Management from Singapore Management University and has a wealth of experience in tri-sector collaborations, working with government agencies, corporations, and community groups to promote kindness in everyday life. With 19 years of dedicated service at SKM, she is passionate about social impact and firmly believes that kindness is everyone's responsibility, playing a vital role in building a more compassionate society.

Beyond her professional role, Michelle is actively involved in community service. She serves as the Secretary of the Jalan Batu Residents Network, where she helps strengthen community ties, and volunteers with the National Environment Agency, advocating for environmental responsibility in Singapore. Her commitment to community engagement has earned her 10-year Long Service Awards from both the People's Association and the National Environment Agency.

With a strong belief that small acts of kindness create lasting change, Michelle continues to champion initiatives that inspire individuals and organizations to cultivate a culture of kindness in Singapore and beyond.

## Breakout #3: Stories that inspire multicultural inclusion and shared purpose



**Dr Khalil Abdur-Rashid**  
Chair of the Board of  
Religious, Spiritual & Ethical  
Life and Muslim Chaplain  
Harvard University

Dr. Khalil Abdur-Rashid serves as one of the two Muslim Chaplains at Harvard University. He is also the Public Policy Lecturer at the Harvard Kennedy School. He was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Khalil completed his **Doctorate in Liberal Studies in American Islam** from Southern Methodist University and holds both a **Master of Arts in Islamic law and Middle East Studies** as well as a **Master of Philosophy in Islamic Law and Middle East Studies** from Columbia University. He pursued Islamic studies not only academically but has also completed traditional studies in Islamic sciences, which led him overseas to study for numerous years in the Middle East and in Istanbul, Turkey. While in Istanbul, Dr. Khalil pursued a master's degree in Comparative Islamic Law at Marmara University and completed two advanced Islamic seminary doctoral licenses (ijaza) in Islamic Sciences. He has over 15 years' experience working in higher education as a teacher, an administrator, and a chaplain. He is often consulted on a wide range of topics related to Islam in America, issues of leadership, public service, and Islamic law. He currently lives in Massachusetts with his wife and children.



**Prof Harvey Whitehouse**  
Director, Centre for the  
Study of Social Cohesion  
University of Oxford

Harvey Whitehouse, Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Magdalen College, is Director of Oxford's Centre for the Study of Social Cohesion and a founding director of Seshat, a vast database on human history that enables scholars and scientists to test hypotheses about the rise and fall of human civilizations. His many books include *The Ritual Animal* (2021, OUP) and *Inheritance: The Evolutionary Origins of the Modern World* (2024, Penguin Random House).



**Mr Mohamed Irshad**  
**[Moderator]**  
Founder, Roses of Peace

Mr Mohamed Irshad is the Head of Corporate Affairs for ASEAN at Tata Consultancy Services a global leader in consulting, business solutions and IT services. He oversees public affairs, government relations, community engagement and various strategic initiative for TCS across ASEAN.

He is also the Founder & President of Roses of Peace (ROP) an interfaith non-profit organisation that seeks to build a harmonious, cohesive and resilient Singapore.

In 2018, he was appointed by the President of Singapore as one of the youngest Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) and served, for one term, in the 13th Parliament of Singapore. During his term, he was a member of the Singapore-South Asia & Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Parliamentary Group.



## Breakout #4: Fostering a resilient digital ecosystem in a multicultural society



**Mr Benjamin Lee**  
Head of Commercial &  
Marketing  
Beach House Labs

Benjamin “Mr Miyagi” Lee is one of the founding fathers of Singapore’s online space, wreaking havoc and compelling content for the last two decades. A “platform-agnostic” storyteller, he has since lent his expertise to helping brands and organisations communicate effectively through every platform and touchpoint available to them.

Benjamin is a firm believer in couching facts and information in story-driven narratives, which have proven to be key drivers in effective communication and brand growth. Clients across various verticals such as finance, automotive, hospitality, FMCG and especially the public sector have benefited from his approach in strategic and tactical communications.

Recent campaigns and projects include helming “Catch”, the content arm of the National Arts Council, and producing Let’s Begin, a first-ever documentary about the next generation of cabinet ministers of Singapore, and another key first – reframing the recruitment campaign for the Prime Minister’s Science & Technology Policy & Plans Office, known as CTRL+Shift.



**Mr Andri Kusumo**  
Engagement Lead,  
Trust & Safety,  
APAC, Google

Andri is the APAC Engagement Lead for the Google Trust and Safety Global Engagements team, leading engagement strategies on online and content safety with safety experts, policymakers, industry leaders and civil society groups.

Before joining Google, Andri was with the Ministry of Digital Development and Information Singapore, working on information policy. Prior to that, Andri was a regional policy manager at TikTok. In addition to policy development, Andri also has experience in consulting and government affairs.

Andri is a passionate advocate for building a safer internet and digital ecosystem for communities.



**Mr Benjamin Ang**  
**[Moderator]**  
Senior Fellow and Head  
Centre of Excellence for  
National Security  
S. Rajaratnam School of  
International Studies

Benjamin Ang is Head of the Centre of Excellence for National Security (CENS), Future Issues in Technology, and Digital Impact Research, at RSIS. He leads the policy research think tank that focuses on national security aspects of Cyber, Hybrid Threats, Disinformation, Foreign Interference, Extremism, Emerging Technologies, AI, Quantum, Space, Biotech, Energy, and Smart Cities.

Before his academic career, Benjamin was a lawyer, network sysadmin, CIO (chief information officer), technology consultant, and educator. Since joining CENS, he has testified before the Select Committee on Online Falsehoods, spoken at the United Nations Open Ended Working Group on Cyber, and contributed to numerous lectures and training programmes including the UN Singapore Cyber Programme and the UN Cyber Diplomacy course.

## Breakout #5: Fostering a resilient digital ecosystem in a multicultural society



**Dr Farish A. Noor**

Professor  
Universitas Islam  
Internasional Indonesia

Prof Farish A. Noor is a political scientist and historian whose work focuses on colonial Southeast Asia. Currently based at the Faculty of Social Science (FOSS), Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII), he has taught at several universities in Southeast Asia and his recent works include *The Long Shadow of the 19th Century: Critical Essays on Colonial Orientalism in Southeast Asia* (Kuala Lumpur: Matahari Books, 2021), *Menuju Jurang Pemisah: Ras, Kuasa, dan Kekerasan Kolonial di Hindia Belanda, 1808-1830* (With Peter Carey, Jakarta: KPG Gramedia Publishers, 2021); *Data-Collecting in 19th Century Colonial Southeast Asia: Framing the Other* (Amsterdam University Press, 2020); *America's Encounters with Southeast Asia 1800-1900: Before the Pivot* (Amsterdam University Press, 2018); *The Discursive Construction of Southeast Asia in the Discourse of 19th Century Colonial-Capitalism* (Amsterdam University Press, 2016); and *The Malaysian Islamic Party 1951-2013: Islamism in a Mottled Nation* (Amsterdam University Press, 2014).



**Dr Caroline Ng  
Tseung-Wong**

Senior Lecturer  
University of Canberra

Dr. Caroline Ng Tseung-Wong is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Canberra, Australia and was previously at the University of Mauritius. Her research expertise is on cultural identities, intergroup relations, and well-being in culturally diverse contexts. Her lived experience as a cultural minority has informed her research practice on Mauritius and Australia respectively. She is interested in understanding how best to manage diverse societies especially the importance of diversity ideologies in intergroup relations and individuals' construction of their social identities in multicultural contexts. She is an associate editor for *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, an open access journal for the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology.



**Dr Leong Chan-Hoong  
[Moderator]**

Senior Fellow and Head  
Social Cohesion Research  
Programme  
S. Rajaratnam School of  
International Studies

Dr Leong Chan-Hoong is Senior Fellow and Head of Social Cohesion Research Programme, at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University. His research interests include migration and intercultural adaptation, inter-ethnic relations, national narratives, and human-environment interactions. Dr Leong is a Fellow and board member of the International Academy for Intercultural Research. He also sits on the International Advisory Board at the Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research in Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, and on the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) Asia Pacific Council.



## Breakout #6: Fighting extremism and polarisation together as one people



### **Rabbi Silvina Chemen**

Vice Rector, Abarbanel  
University Institute  
Director, Center for Dialogue  
and Social Action, Marshall  
T. Meyer Latin American  
Rabbinical Seminary

Rabbi Silvina Chemen holds a degree in Hebrew Language and Hebrew Bible from the Michlelet Shazar Institute and Social Communication from the University of Buenos Aires. After being ordained as a Rabbi by The Latin American Rabbinical Seminary in 2006, she now serves as a Senior Rabbi at Beth El Congregation. She also co-founded the Ana Frank Argentina Center for Latin America.

As an activist for human rights and social justice, she is the author of various books on education, human rights, and interreligious coexistence. For her excellent work in advocating for equal opportunities, as well as social and religious coexistence against any discrimination, she has been declared a Distinguished Personality by the city of Buenos Aires.

She is concurrently a board member of the G20 Forum of Religions, (R20), a member of the Advisory Council of the Center for Shared Civilizational Values, as well as the Permanent Secretariat of the G20 Religion Forum (R20). Apart from these, she is also a member of the Advisory Board of the Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue at the Jewish Theological Seminar (JTS) and part of the executive committee of Global Jewry, a global platform for Jews worldwide.

Rabbi Chemen co-authored the seminal document, Abrahamic Faiths Initiative: An Invitation to Conversation and Action, in collaboration with a small group of Christian and Muslim leaders — including key figures within the G20 Religion Forum (R20) — and the U.S. Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom. Finally, she also works closely with senior Nahdlatul Ulama, CSCV, and R20 leaders in executing The Road Not Yet Taken Initiative: A Multi-Religious Path Towards Middle East Peace.



### **Prof Mike Hardy** **CMG OBE FRSA**

Professor of Intercultural  
Relations  
Coventry University

Mike Hardy is Professor of Intercultural Relations and founding Director of the Centre for Peace and Security at Coventry University and adjunct Professor of Leadership at ICB LSRP Indonesia. He is Board Chair of the International Leadership Association, ([www.ilaglobalnetwork.org](http://www.ilaglobalnetwork.org)) and a member of the International Advisory Board of ICESCO. His recent passion has been the development of Coventry's **Public Leadership Lab**, an innovation and experience-sharing process pointed at positive peacebuilding. His current work is based on extended conversations with global influencers: Leading and Learning in a **Polycrisis World**.

Mike trained as economist, and was a Fulbright Scholar in California before leading Economics Departments at both Leeds and Lancashire Universities in the UK.

From 1995-2011, Mike was a UK diplomat posted in Cairo, Ramallah and Jakarta. Honoured in 2001, awarded the OBE for his peace-building work in the Middle East, and appointed a UK Companion of Honour of St Michael and St George (CMG) in 2010 for his work globally in Intercultural Dialogue. In 2002, he was recognised by the United Nations for work with civil society in the Levant, and in 2024 by the Government of Indonesia, PIN EMAS, for his support to the development of Indonesia's Counter Terrorism Strategy.



**Prof Paul Hedges**

**[Moderator]**

Professor of Interreligious Studies, Studies in Inter-religious Relations in Plural Societies (SRP) Programme  
S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

Dr Paul Hedges is a Life Member at Clare Hall, University of Cambridge, UK, and Professor of Interreligious Studies, and Associate Dean (Scholarly Ecosystems), at RSIS, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He has taught in Asia, Europe, and North America. A leading global scholar in interreligious studies whose work is regularly cited and employed, he researches, teaches, and publishes in interreligious studies, theory and method in the study of religion, contemporary global Christian theologies, prejudice studies, and decolonising academia. He has worked with media, NGOs, faith groups, and governments. He has published fifteen books and over ninety scholarly papers. His most recent book is *Christian Polytheism? Polydox Theologies of Multi-devotional and Decolonial Praxis* (Routledge 2025).

## Breakout #7: Expanding our common space through everyday multiculturalism



**Prof Katy Bennett**  
Professor of Human  
Geography  
University of Leicester

Katy Bennett is Professor in Human Geography at the University of Leicester. Her research advances ways of understanding how people live together in an era of global migration and ethnically complex populations. Her research has made conceptual and methodological advances in understanding the changing geographies of multiculturalism and how superdiversity is lived and experienced, interfacing social sciences and participatory approaches with psychotherapeutic techniques and opportunities of digitality. She has led or been Co-I on projects funded by UKRI, the Leverhulme Trust and the European Union, winning the 2020 SAGE Sociology prize for Innovation and Excellence. Her publications include *The Lived Experiences of Multiculture: the new spatial and social relations of diversity* (2018 Routledge, London - with Sarah Neal, Allan Cochrane and Giles Mohan), *Digital geographies of everyday multiculturalism: 'Let's go Nando's!'* (2023 Social and Cultural Geography Journal), *The wherewithal of living together (apart): Advancing concepts and methods in research on everyday multiculturalism* (2025, Ethnic and Racial Studies). Katy is on the Editorial Board for *Geography Compass* and *Emotion, Space and Society*.

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**Prof Susanne Wessendorf**  
Professor of Social  
Anthropology  
Institute for Peace and  
Security Coventry University

Susanne Wessendorf is a Professor of Social Anthropology at the Centre for Peace and Security at Coventry University, UK. She earned her DPhil from the University of Oxford, where she was based at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS). Her research explores contemporary dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion in contexts of immigration-related diversity. She has published extensively on social relations in super-diverse areas and the settlement patterns of recent migrants. Her current work examines recent immigration into urban arrival areas, focusing on how newcomers navigate and access support through arrival infrastructures.

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**Dr Selvaraj Velayutham**  
**[Moderator]**  
Associate Professor of  
Sociology  
School of Communication,  
Society and Culture  
Macquarie University

Selvaraj Velayutham is Associate Professor in the Discipline of Sociology, School of Communication, Society and Culture. His research areas include race and racism, everyday multiculturalism, arrival infrastructures and the sociology of everyday life. He draws on ethnographic and other qualitative research methods to explore structural and institutional factors underpinning questions of power, identity and social relations in everyday life. He has published widely on transnational migration, everyday racism, and living with cultural diversity. He is currently working on two major projects: informal sport, social resilience and urban commons and everyday survival and wellbeing among workers performing gig platform delivery work.

## Breakout #8: Rebuilding trust and cohesion after social tragedies



**Datu Mussolini Lidasan**

Director  
Al Qalam Institute  
Ateneo de Davao University

Datu Mussolini Sinsuat Lidasan, MA, Jurist Doctor (JD), is a respected figure in the realm of conflict resolution and interfaith dialogue in Southeast Asia. As the visionary founding director of the Al Qalam Institute of Islamic Identities and Dialogue at Ateneo de Davao University, he has played a pivotal role in promoting understanding and harmony within diverse communities.



**Superintendent Rakesh Naidoo MNZM**

National Manager Ethnic Partnerships  
New Zealand Police

Superintendent Rakesh Naidoo is the National Ethnic Partnerships Manager with the New Zealand Police. Rakesh leads the Police Ethnic Strategy implementation that ensures the organisation has the capability and capacity to respond to diverse ethnic communities who come from approximately 230 different ethnicities speaking over 170 different languages.

Rakesh has contributed to the successful ethnic communities' response to the Canterbury Earthquakes in 2011, Christchurch terrorist attacks in 2019 and implementing All of Government system level responses to address issues relating to hate, discrimination, exploitation, pandemics, and security.

His leadership extends beyond policing, creating meaningful connections across communities to enhance social cohesion. His work continues to shape how New Zealand Police and wider society engage with multicultural communities, fostering trust, fairness, and resilience.

Rakesh is respected for his governance insights and volunteer work that has included Sport New Zealand, Wellington Interfaith Council, New Zealand Football, the Football Foundation and the acclaimed Gandhi Nivas early intervention Family Harm programme.

In 2023 he was recognised in the Kings Birthday and Coronation Honours and made a Member New Zealand Order of Merit for services to Ethnic communities and New Zealand Police.



**Dr Alistair Cook [Moderator]**

Senior Fellow and Coordinator  
Humanitarian Assistance and  
Disaster Relief Programme  
Institute of Defence and  
Strategic Studies  
S. Rajaratnam School of  
International Studies

Dr Alistair D. B. Cook is a Senior Fellow and Coordinator in the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Programme within the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University. His research interests focus geographically on the Asia-Pacific and Myanmar in particular and thematically on humanitarian affairs, foreign policy and regional cooperation. His latest publication is an edited volume in 2025 - Disasters and Humanitarian Action: Dynamic Shifts, Reflections and Anticipating Future Directions.

# Cohesion Forward



**Ms Wendy Makundi**  
Senior Producer and Host  
Our Grandfather Story

A multi-talented content creator with a rich cultural background, Wendy blends her African and Singaporean roots to create unique and captivating content on her platforms. She is the lead producer, host, and creative force behind Hidden Hustles, a long-form series by local media platform Our Grandfather Story, where she shines a light on under-the-radar jobs and vocations in Singapore.

Beyond storytelling, Wendy is a passionate advocate for racial equity and inclusivity. In her ongoing micro-series Wendy's Passport on Our Grandfather Story's micro-content platforms, she draws from her experience as a third-culture kid growing up in Singapore. Through candid conversations with others from similar backgrounds, she explores the nuanced realities of migration, identity, and what it means to make Singapore home.

Through her work, she sparks meaningful conversations and champions social change on issues close to her heart.

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**Ms Neila Maryam**  
General Manager  
Architects of Diversity

Neila is the General Manager of Architects of Diversity (AOD), a non-profit organisation dedicated to fostering a peaceful, equitable, and inclusive Malaysia. She plays a pivotal role in strengthening AOD's operational systems and team dynamics, ensuring the organisation operates efficiently to drive lasting impact.

With nearly four years in civil society, Neila's work focuses on monitoring and evaluating AOD's initiatives, ensuring they effectively catalyse social cohesion and systemic change. She is dedicated to positioning AOD as a key player in Malaysia's inclusivity ecosystem, equipping communities and leaders with the tools to shape a more equitable society.

A creative writer at heart and former Communications Manager at AOD, Neila's expertise in storytelling enhances AOD's role as a narrative builder, weaving together reflections and learnings that deepen understanding and inspire action. Through her work, she continuously captures the essence of transformation, amplifying the voices of those driving change.

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**Mr Alex Low**  
Co-founder and Director  
Interfaith.sg

Alex Low is a key leader in Heart of God Church's (HOGC) interfaith community work. He partners with mosques, temples, and other religious organisations to foster social cohesion, especially among youths. He promotes racial and religious harmony through in-person and online community efforts.

Among Alex's interfaith community work, he recently helped organise HOGC's sixth interfaith blood donation drive, in collaboration with Khalid Mosque, Geylang United Temple, and the Chan Khoo Khong Huay clan association.

Alex is also Co-founder and Director of Interfaith.sg, an online initiative that brings together religious organisations with a goal to digitise harmony. One of the projects of Interfaith.sg was an online playbook for running interfaith events, which Alex co-developed with youths from Khalid Mosque.

Beyond leading initiatives, Alex mentors young leaders from HOGC in interfaith work, continuing the church's decade-long commitment to building friendships and understanding across faiths.



**Ms Amna Ben Amara**

Researcher and Consultant  
Intercultural Management

Amna is a researcher and consultant in intercultural management. She holds two master's degrees in Intercultural Management (Slovenia) and Cultural Studies (Tunisia) and is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at the University of Tours, France. In addition to presenting at international conferences and congresses, she has designed and facilitated several courses and workshops on intercultural communication and diversity for various audiences, including educators, students, HR professionals, and cultural diversity enthusiasts. Through her research, publications, and professional engagements, Amna continues to contribute to the advancement of intercultural management and the promotion of inclusive dialogue on cultural complexity. She was recently invited as a visiting researcher at the University of Paris-Est Créteil, France.



**Ms Tarina Ahuja**

Youth Advocate and  
Organiser  
Sikh American National  
Youth Council / Young  
Khalsa Girls / Greater Good  
Initiative / Parliament of  
World's Religions

Tarina Ahuja is a Sikh-American community organizer and human rights activist. She graduated from Harvard and will attend Stanford Law. She is the Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of the nonprofit Young Khalsa Girls, a grassroots organization empowering young girls to serve their communities. She is also the Co-Founder of The Greater Good Initiative, a youth-led, national policy think tank. Seeing a need to build unity amongst Sikh youth, she launched the Sikh American National Youth Council, creating the nation's first Sikh youth organizing platform. Tarina is an internationally renowned speaker, engaging venues spanning from TEDx, the National Democratic Institute, the Parliament of World's Religions, ForeignPolicy, and more. Her work has been recognized by the American Courage Awards, the International Association for Youth and Students for Peace, and the Phillips Brooks House. Her work has been featured on CBS, Comcast, AP, Scripps, and more. She has worked in many capacities on human rights and social justice issues. Her experience includes time with Amnesty International, the National Democratic Institute, and the Greater Chicago Legal Clinic. She is currently a Weil Legal Innovation Fellow working on the International Litigation and Advocacy Team at RFK Human Rights focusing on civic space and the protection of human rights defenders globally.

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