

SINGAPORE RED CROSS HUMANITARIAN CONFERENCE 2021

OPENING REMARKS

MS TAN POH HONG, VICE CHAIRMAN, SINGAPORE RED CROSS

Good afternoon,

Minister for Health, Mr Ong Ye Kung,

COO of Marina Bay Sands, Mr Paul Town and distinguished guests both here in the ballroom and online. On behalf of the SRC, I welcome you to the 6th Singapore Red Cross (SRC) Humanitarian Conference.

In 2015, SRC launched its first Humanitarian Conference. Besides a platform to discuss issues confronting the humanitarian sector, the conference was also a platform SRC convenes and brings together like-minded humanitarians, particularly amongst Singaporeans. Bringing together humanitarian actors from various organisations, providing the opportunity for participants to gain useful insights and discuss different perspectives on a number of humanitarian trends and challenges facing the world today. The past few Humanitarian Conferences brought together hundreds of people globally from all walks and ages, to discuss important topics such as health, green disaster response, migration, and partnership and volunteerism.

Encouraged by the success of the past Humanitarian Conferences, we had initially planned to hold a major event in 2020. Unfortunately, we were not able to do so due to

the pandemic, postponing it to 2021 instead. However, as the COVID-19 situation continues to persist and even re-emerging in variant mutations, this year's Conference is being held with a more modest on-site participation. Nevertheless, I am glad that there is a much broader participation online and your presence means so much to us.

In this Covid19 environment, many corporations and organisations have had to curtail their activities and we have become used to the term being MUTED. However, despite the numerous challenges brought about by COVID19, SRC remains **UNMUTED**. Our staff and volunteers have been actively responding to the needs of the vulnerable both locally and internationally.

Which brings me to the theme of this year's Conference - "Nurturing Young Humanitarians for Action". Over the last two years or so, in the face of the greatest humanitarian crisis of a century, we have witnessed many groups of young people in our society stepping up to make a difference in the lives of people and communities badly affected by the pandemic. For example, our own Red Cross Youth Chapter members initiated Project Courage: Acts of Kindness (AOK) to brighten up the days of our essential frontline workers by delivering flowers and handwritten appreciation cards to them. Many young staff and volunteers availed of their time to pack and distribute care packages to the migrant workers and low income families while many of us were working from home. They took risks, but were undaunted in carrying out their tasks.

Numerous young people came forward to donate blood when blood stocks were running low.

On an international scale, we have a young staff team, all below 30, who worked tirelessly to procure and deliver urgently needed medical supplies to more than 20 countries in the region, and often, encountering and overcoming complex logistical, customs and even political challenges to deliver this humanitarian aid.

The experiences have once again highlighted the fact that young people are important agents of change in today's world. Not only that, with the numerous and increasingly complex issues that we face, climate change, pandemics, severe weather and natural and manmade disasters, we need to harness the energy, vibrancy and innovativeness of our young people in order to find answers to these challenges.

Hence we decided on the theme “*Nurturing Young Humanitarians for Action*” for this year's Humanitarian Conference. The aim is to encourage our youth to step up to the plate, and take responsibility for finding the solutions of the future for themselves and for the generations to come. They will need to use their talent, skills and strengths to overcome humanitarian challenges and create a more humane and kind society.

Joining us today, both physically and virtually, is a line-up of distinguished speakers. First and foremost, we are indeed privileged and honoured to have the Minister for Health, Mr Ong Ye Kung as the keynote speaker. Following Minister Ong, we have Dr

Yang Mee Eng from the ASEAN Foundation, Ms Musubi Yata from the Japanese Red Cross and Mr Louis Ng, Member of Parliament for Nee Soon GRC. They will be delving into the various ways young people can make an impact in society, based on their personal experiences. Apart from these distinguished speakers, we will also be hearing from the Top 3 winners of the inaugural SRC Humanitarian Innovation Challenge on their ideas regarding blood donation and climate change. Finally we will hear from a panel of four young humanitarians, all of whom have inspiring personal humanitarian journeys. These sessions will be moderated by Mr Augustine Anthuvan.

Before I call on Minister Ong, I would like to take this opportunity to thank a few groups of people. First of all, I would like to thank Minister Ong for accepting our invitation as our Guest of Honour and keynote speaker and making time to share his thoughts and challenge the young people in our midst. To the speakers, panelists and students who would be sharing this afternoon, thank you for the great work you have done thus far and for sharing your ideas and experiences with us.

I would like to say a special thanks to MBS and Mr Paul Town and his staff for sponsoring this wonderful venue and supporting our humanitarian work, both locally and internationally as part of Sands Cares. To our emcees, Nadia and Brightman, thank you for hosting this event with your vibrant energy, and to Mr Augustine Anthuvan, we are really grateful to you for going above and beyond to coach the teams from the Humanitarian Innovation Challenge and for agreeing to moderate the panel discussion later. Last but not the least, I want to thank all of you in the audience both physically and

virtually for taking time on a Friday afternoon to join us at this event and I assure you that your time will be meaningfully spent here.

I hope all of us will learn something from this Conference today. Thank you.