

Please check against delivery

**WELCOME REMARKS BY MR ZAINUDIN NORDIN CHAIRMAN,
ONEPEOPLE.SG AT THE FINALE OF ORANGE RIBBON
CELEBRATIONS - HARMONYWORKS! CONFERENCE 2013
“GENERATION NEXT: THE FUTURE OF HARMONY ON SATURDAY, 27
JULY AT SINGAPORE POLYTECHNIC COVENTION CENTRE**

Good Morning

Mr Ong Wooi-Hsen, Senior Lecturer and Head of NE Committee,
Singapore Polytechnic

Fellow Board Members

Teachers

Facilitators

Ladies and Gentlemen and

Students

I would like to warmly welcome you to today's Conference. I am heartened to see so many of you rise early on a weekend to be with us at this Conference. Your keen interest is what keeps us going to organise this Conference every year.

2 The HarmonyWorks! Conference was first started in 2005 with a single objective – to give youths a platform to speak their minds about race relations in our country. We feel that as our young generation, you

will shape Singapore's racial and religious harmony in the future; and your views are important. Hence, today's Conference theme - "Generation Next: The Future of Harmony" is all about you taking ownership of the cause. Today's Conference will challenge you to probe key issues concerning race relations, such as where do we stand on racial harmony? What challenges we need to confront? And how best we can we move forward. And I am certainly eager to hear your views.

3 As you may be aware, the Institute of Policy Studies and OnePeople.sg recently released Indicators for Racial and Religious Harmony after surveying over 4,000 people. So now for the first time, we have a way of measuring racial and religious harmony. Very often, when we speak of racial harmony we talk about tolerance. But racial harmony means more than that. It is about respect, understanding and trust.

4 So, how did we score on the indicators? Well, I must say I am pleased with the results. The survey shows Singaporeans value diversity. We understand that we can learn from different racial and religious groups. While we come across racist comments, most visible

on social media, most of us do not feel such inter-racial or inter-religious tensions. We feel strongly that it is better for Singapore to be made up of different races. Now this is not something that happens naturally in other countries. In the US, research shows that you are more likely to be picked up when you are Black by the police on the streets for questioning than if you are white. It does not happen here. And this is something we can be proud about.

5 While the study shows very encouraging results, there are some gaps that we would need to pay closer attention to. Although most Singaporeans are open to cross racial friendships; we seem more likely to build such close friendships with those of our own race. So you have to ask yourself, how many friends do you have from a different race? And the best way to do that is to look at the list of contacts in your mobile phone. Do you have names of friends of a different race in your contact list? If No, then now is a good time to start building friendships. All it takes is to turn to the next person beside you and smile.

6 The study also shows that more can be done in the area of understanding people from different cultures. While we are positive

about racial and religious diversity, some of us don't seem to know enough about other cultures. For example, why Muslims fast during Ramadan? Or what is the significance of the Hungry Ghost Festival or why Hindus celebrate Thaipusam? This knowledge helps us learn something new and appreciate each other better. And if you reflect deep enough, you would be able to find commonalities. Though we may look different, we have many things in common. This is the beauty of our diversity.

7 The study on the whole provides a good review of Singapore's race and religious relations. I am glad that this set of indicators now gives all of us, especially our youths, a new reference point to look at to strengthen racial and religious relations since the racial riots. OnePeople.sg will use these indicators as a basis of continued dialogue. In fact, you are the first ones to be engaged in a public Conference like this in our series of engagements planned ahead. My fellow Board Member, Dr Mathew Mathews will later further elaborate on the results of our joint survey with the Institute of Policy Studies. We wish to hear your reflections on these indicators, especially your impressions of

strengths and gaps later in the discussions. And more importantly, we hope to hear what you can do to narrow these gaps.

8 In the afternoon, you have an opportunity to engage our Guest of Honour, Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, Acting Minister for Manpower along with our distinguished panel members which include Neil Humphreys, a soccer pundit and a well know author in a dialogue session. So make full use of the opportunity to ask all your burning questions. If you have an excellent idea, this is the time to share. You would also get to feast on multi-ethnic delicacies and enjoy rich multicultural performances. Get ready for an enriching Conference.

9 I would like to take this opportunity to thank Singapore Polytechnic for partnering us in this Conference. A special mention also goes out to student volunteers of Singapore Polytechnic as well as volunteers from our youth wing for their support. I would also like to thank our passionate volunteer facilitators who have made time to partake in this Conference. My appreciation also goes out to Ministry for Culture, Community and Youth, Ministry of Home Affairs, the National Integration Council, Lee Foundation and Flame of the Forest for their

kind contributions. Last but not least, I would like to thank all of you for your active participation. I wish you a meaningful day ahead. Thank you.