

SPEECH BY MR AMRIN AMIN, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS AND HEALTH, AT THE OPENING OF THE SINGAPORE HUMANITARIAN YOUTH SUMMIT 2017 ON SATURDAY, 1 JULY 2017 AT REPUBLIC POLYTECHNIC

Mr Benjamin William, Secretary-General of the Singapore

Red Cross,

Mr Yeo Li Pheow, Principal of Republic Polytechnic,

Youth Leaders,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Introduction

1. A very good morning to all. It is my honour to join everyone here today at the inaugural Singapore Humanitarian Youth Summit.
2. Over the next two days, around 200 young people from Singapore and the Asia Pacific region will come

together to learn more about current humanitarian issues and challenges. This event will also provide a platform for young people to exchange ideas and experiences as you work together on formulating action plans for collaboration in the areas of volunteerism and civic engagement.

3. But most importantly, the next two days will help to strengthen youth networks in Singapore and around the region as you forge friendships and bonds during the event.

4. You are an important and formidable force. Especially in our current security climate, young people play an integral role in strengthening community cohesion and safeguarding our way of life.

Security Situation in Singapore

5. In Singapore, we have enjoyed many years of peace and security in a multi-racial and multi-religious society. However this peace and stability is something that we should never take for granted. Terrorism and radicalisation pose the biggest security threats to our peace and stability.

6. In recent months, we have witnessed several terror attacks around the world – the attacks in London and Manchester as well as closer to home in Marawi, Philippines. These attacks resulted in deaths of innocent people, with many more injured.

7. At home, recent news of several Singaporeans who were arrested under the Internal Security Act for being radicalised and involved in terror-related activities also came as a shock to many.

8. These developments show that terrorism is a pervasive global threat not limited to any geographical region or to any social or ethnic group. With Singapore facing the highest terror threat in recent years, we must be prepared for any emergency situation.

Preparing Youth to be Leaders during Emergency Situations

9. We have to tackle the threat of extremist violence and terrorism together. The Government and the security agencies cannot counter the terror threat alone. All of us have a role in keeping Singapore safe.

10. You may have heard of SGSecure or seen SGSecure posters around your housing estates and MRT stations. We launched the SGSecure movement last year to empower a community response to the terror threat. It is a national movement to sensitise, train and mobilise our community to play a part to prevent and deal with a terrorist attack.

Enhancing Vigilance

11. Young people like yourselves have an important part to play in this movement. The first thing you can do is to stay alert and report suspicious sightings or activities to the authorities. We have introduced the SGSecure app to make it easy for you to report potential threats to us via your mobile phones.

12. I strongly encourage you to download the app. I also hope that you will actively guide those around you who may not be as digitally savvy on using the app, so as to enhance our collective vigilance against possible threats that threaten our peace and stability. Through the app, you can also receive alerts on local security incidents and terror attacks happening around the world, which will help keep you and your loved ones safe.

Strengthening Community Cohesion - Creating a Culture of Mutual Respect and Understanding

13. The second thing young people can do is to be more discerning about what you read online or on social media platforms. It is crucial that young people seek answers and clarifications from credible and legitimate sources when in doubt.

14. As youth leaders in your communities, you can do your part by not participating in the spreading of untruths or rumours that can sow discord and distrust in our community, and better still, debunk them. You can also use social media or your own networks to counter the impact of radical thought by promoting inclusiveness and understanding, both in peacetime and during a crisis.

15. One example of such youth-led action was in the aftermath of the Boston bombing in April 2013. A group of young Muslims rallied together to promote a better understanding of Islam and debunk misperceptions about the religion. This group of young people handed out messages about interfaith harmony and spoke to others in their community about how their faith is based on the message of peace.

16. In Singapore, a similar youth-driven interfaith initiative was started to spread the universal message of love, peace, harmony and kindness. Called the “Roses of Peace initiative”, a group of student volunteers distribute roses and greeting cards bearing personalised messages of peace and love to the community every year.
17. This year, they distributed around 7,000 roses in fifteen locations. With its theme "The Singapore Kampong Spirit", it emphasised the need to help and care for one another in our communities and neighbourhoods. The initiative echoed an important message - living together in peace and harmony does not happen by chance but rather is a conscious choice backed by action. This community spirit is

what will enable us to stand strong in the face of the terror threat.

Staying Strong and Resilient

18. Finally, it is also important that you equip yourself with skills and knowledge on how to respond in the event of a terror attack. These skills and knowledge can help to keep you and those around you safe during an emergency situation.

19. There are many ways you can go about preparing for emergencies. This can include picking up basic first aid skills, or familiarising yourself with SGSecure advisories. This includes the “Run, Hide, Tell” advisory on what to do in a terror attack. As well as the “Press, Tie, Tell” advisory on how you can make use of commonly available items to administer first aid to those injured. I urge you to share these skills

and knowledge with your loved ones, and take the step forward to help those in need when a crisis hits.

Conclusion

20. Being vigilant to threats, strengthening community cohesion, and preparing yourself to be resilient in times of emergencies are basic skills everyone should have and are applicable to a wide range of challenges and adversities that you may face.

21. I am heartened to know that there are so many young people who are passionate about serving the community and playing their part to make our home a safer, better place for everyone. I hope that the next two days would not only be informative but also inspire you to take action to face the various challenges facing your generation.

22. With that, I wish you all a meaningful and successful conference. Thank you.
