

***Judiciary of the Future***

**International Conference on Court Excellence**

**28 to 29 January 2016**

**Welcome Remarks by Judicial Commissioner See Kee Oon,  
Presiding Judge of the State Courts**

The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Chief Justices, Judges, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. Good morning and a very warm welcome to the International Conference on Court Excellence organised by the State Courts of Singapore. On behalf of the organising committee, I thank all of you for your interest and participation. In particular, it gives me great pleasure to welcome to Singapore our speakers and participants who are joining us from overseas. I am heartened to know that we have 18 jurisdictions represented and we are greatly honoured by your presence.
2. The International Consortium for Court Excellence (“ICCE”) developed and formally launched the International Framework for Court Excellence in 2010. This Framework was designed to provide common benchmarks to assist courts around the world to measure and improve their performance. The framework has been acknowledged by judiciaries across different continents as a court management methodology of a global standard.
3. Alongside the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration (AIJA), and Federal Judicial Centre and the National Centre for State Courts of the United States, the State Courts of Singapore are a founding member of the ICCE which currently has 35 members. Since its inception, members of the Consortium have taken the initiative to host events, such as this Conference, to promote the use of the Framework in fostering court excellence in judiciaries worldwide.
4. This year’s Conference is themed “Judiciary of the Future”. Its focus is twofold: on the potential of the Framework, and on examining the changes and challenges of our times that have transformed the judicial landscape in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It showcases the innovative responses from judiciaries worldwide to the challenges of the present even as we plan and prepare for the future. The Conference brings together all who are engaged

in court management - judges, court administrators, policy makers and experts from related fields to discuss how these changes and other trends will influence court performance and the development and delivery of court services in the coming years.

5. We live in an increasingly globalised, connected and borderless world. New and emerging technologies have disrupted traditional ways of providing services and doing business. The proliferation of the Internet and mobile technologies has meant that access to information and online platforms have radically changed the way governments, businesses and private individuals interact. People's attitudes on how they are to be governed are changing across the globe as well. Citizens demand more than incorruptibility, efficiency and effectiveness. They believe that good governance involves being informed, heard and consulted.
6. These are some of the key driving forces that are already with us. They pose long-term challenges for the justice sector but they also present tremendous opportunities for judiciaries. We must think and act strategically and proactively, pushing boundaries to discover exciting and innovative ways to transform and improve judicial efficiency and enhance access to effective justice.
7. Among the most passionate proponents of change and innovation in the justice sector is Professor Richard Susskind OBE. Just last year, Professor Susskind spoke at a Legal Futures Conference held in our Supreme Court auditorium. Professor Susskind has lamented that "*the working practices of (Common Law) lawyers and judges have not changed much since the time of Charles Dickens*", as if courts and lawyers are in a perpetual 19<sup>th</sup> century time warp. But he can take heart that many judges are receptive to his clarion call for judiciaries to be alive to the realities of the future. They fully appreciate the need to keep pace with technology's rapid development. There is a clear and general consensus that judiciaries must embrace change and strive to find better ways in which they can operate and deliver court services in this complex and constantly-changing environment.
8. Over the next two days, the Conference programme will take participants through a broad sweep of some of the most important issues judiciaries will face in preparing for the future. We have an impressive lineup of speakers which includes three Chief Justices. The keynote address will be delivered by the Honourable Chief Justice Marilyn Warren AC of the Supreme Court of Victoria, Australia. I wish to thank all our distinguished speakers for graciously agreeing to share their insight at this Conference.

They will delve deeply into the important question of where our judiciaries are heading, the exciting ways in which the new technologies of the digital world have impacted (or disrupted) our justice systems and demonstrate innovative initiatives that anticipate the changes ahead. Once again I also wish to thank all participants for your interest and involvement in this Conference.

9. The future, it has been said, is not fixed. We can only say with certainty that it will not be predictable. This Conference is but a glimpse into the possible futures of our respective judiciaries. Just as there can be new entrants to the justice system, there must be novel means to deal with alternative legal structures and innovative ways to meet the needs of our justice users. I am confident that the International Framework for Court Excellence with its newest modifications will be a foremost resource to help us deliver high quality services to our justice users.
10. As we hear from our distinguished speakers, we encourage all participants to engage them and exchange ideas with each other through conversations about the numerous challenges, controversies, ideas and initiatives which will no doubt surface throughout the presentations. No one can lay claim to having all the right answers, but we do hope to generate serious reflection and constructive debate and discussion. There will be much food for thought and much to digest. I look forward to the many insights to be gained. Thank you for your participation and I hope you will find the Conference to be a rewarding and enriching experience.