

ADDRESS BY MS MARY LIEW, GENERAL SECRETARY, SINGAPORE MARITIME OFFICERS' UNION, SMOU'S 65TH ANNIVERSARY GALA DINNER, 'GROWING TOGETHER WITH YOU' ON 25 NOVEMBER 2016

Our Guest-of-Honour, NTUC Secretary-General Brother Chan Chun Sing

Special Guest, Minister for Manpower Brother Lim Swee Say

Speaker of Parliament, Madam Halimah Yacob

Tripartite partners

Friends from the international and local maritime community

NTUC Central Committee members, Sisters and Brothers from the Labour Movement

SMOU Exco, Advisors, Trustees and Members

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening and a warm welcome.

To our overseas guests, 你好, Selamat Datang, Hallo (Norwegian), Kamusta (Filipino), Kon'nichiwa (Japanese), annyeong-ha-se-yo (Korean), Bonjour (French). Please pardon me if I have not mastered all the various 'hello' in other languages. Tonight, we are truly honoured to have more than 50 overseas guests from different parts of the world including Australia, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, France, Norway, Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, US, UK, and Ukraine. We are happy to have with us Brother Stephen Cotton, General Secretary of the International Transport Workers' Federation or ITF for short, Sister Jacqueline Smith, ITF Maritime Coordinator and Dr Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry, President of the World Maritime University.

Thank you for joining us to celebrate SMOU's 65th anniversary. We have come a long way from 1951, where we started with 11 members. Today, our membership is 30,000 and growing. This achievement is the result of the progressive efforts, hard work and support from our tripartite partners and members.

As a forward-looking union, we are not one to rest on our laurels. We recognise that the maritime industry is facing a gloomy situation. With an evolving global economy where change is constant, we have identified 3 areas of key focus in the current and coming years. Allow me to elaborate.

Doing Good for Members/Workers

The first area will be our members. Without them, the union will be an empty vessel. I would like to share some 65th anniversary highlights that reflects how the union has been and will be helping members on a holistic scale.

During our annual Lunar New Year Luncheon in February, it was the first time we provided transport for our members who have mobility challenges so they could attend. Tonight, we also have with us 2 wheelchair-bound members, Mr Leo Boon Fui and Mr Lai Kwan To, as well as their family members. Providing transport for members to SMOU events, as well as subsidies for hospital visits and medical check-ups are ways that we want to let members know we care for them. In fact, this is part of our SMOU Care Fund which also covers subsidies for assistive devices, and bursary assistance for children of deceased members. One of our needy members, Mr Mohamed Fajari, has been recently diagnosed with kidney failure. He has multiple health issues and will require some form of transport subsidies for his visits to the hospital as well as dialysis treatment. In fact due to Mr Fajari's ill-health, he may soon require assistive devices like a wheelchair to help him get around, so the SMOU Care Fund will certainly lighten the financial burden on his family.

And among the many activities we have for our members, the annual SMOU Family Day is usually our biggest event. This year was a Family Nite for the first time, where we booked the entire Universal Studios Singapore for a record-high 4,600 members and families, tripartite partners and various community homes to have fun and bond together. We also had a 65 cents main course, and monthly \$6.50 set lunch for members at our social enterprise, Lighthouse Bistro. To date, we have had close to 2,000 claims for the \$6.50 set lunch! As a result of this overwhelming response from our members, we are pleased to share that we will be continuing a similar promotion

for the next year! So for those who are not our members, there's never a better time to join us.

We do not just celebrate our 65th Anniversary with our members in Singapore. Come next Friday, we will be in Manila wrapping up our anniversary celebrations with our Filipino members on 2nd December, where Brother Dr Conrad Oca from Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines will be our Special Guest.

SMOU is always a firm believer in training and skills upgrading of our members, for this enables them to add value to their work. In spite of the shipping slowdown, we organised a charity golf for the NTUC Education and Training Fund, or NETF, raising some \$250,000. In addition, we will contribute another \$400,000 for the NETF, which makes it a total of \$650,000. Our Prime Minister has committed to triple the amount we raised to train our working people – I think this is one of the best investments we have; in total we would have \$2.6 million for our workers. Through this, workers receive a helping hand to stay competitive, so that when the economy picks up, they will be ready to ride the waves.

Strengthening the Singapore Core

The second area is the Singapore Maritime Core. To address the shortage of seafarers in Singapore and across the globe, SMOU is committed to training up a pool of qualified and competent seafarers. Hence the initiation of the Tripartite Engineering Training Award, or TETA for short, this year to address the lack of marine engineers in our industry. The programme joins the Tripartite Nautical Training Award, better known as TNTA, a similar initiative to train marine officers, to make it a two-pronged approach by SMOU to contribute to the pool of Singapore officers in the maritime community. In total, over 300 cadets have been awarded the programme, giving them a second opportunity to pursue a career for better wages and lead better lives.

The TNTA has seen 12 intakes while TETA has welcomed 2 intakes. During their training, the cadets receive at least 70 to 120 hours of training at our state-of-the-art Wavelink Maritime Simulation Centre which houses 4 different simulators. This gives them an edge and a confidence boost to better prepare them for their shipboard assignments.

A couple of weeks ago, we witnessed the graduation of TNTA Cohort 11 and the investiture of TNTA Cohort 12 and TETA Cohort 2. Brother Puni, the TNTA 11 Class President gave a very moving and inspiring graduation speech. The sky is the limit, stay positive and fly the Singapore flag high. To the new batch of TNTA cadets from Cohort 12, some of you have told me that you will do better than your previous batch. I hold you to your words that you will not only do your best, but be better, betterer and betterest!

The success of both programmes must be credited to the immense support from our tripartite partners – the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, Singapore Shipping Association, Workforce Singapore, NTUC's Employment and Employability Institute and also the shipping companies. I urge the shipping companies to keep up the support by providing more placements, for without these, our cadets will not be able to have a chance for a better career and a better life.

Preparing for the Future

The shipping industry is integrally an indispensable part of the global economy, and SMOU is a part of this dynamic maritime network. The sudden collapse of Hanjin Shipping reminds us more than ever that we must be attuned to storms that may hit our shores, and come up with ideas to keep our members relevant so they will not be left behind. To do this, we must inculcate a mindset of lifelong learning, with a strong emphasis on upskilling and upgrading, so as to ready our members to face the jobs of tomorrow.

We have weathered many crises before. I believe that if we work together, we are collectively stronger and more able to turn each crisis into opportunity.

We must also continue to uphold tripartism, a practice that has proven to be successful for our country. The secret lies in that our government, shipping companies, and union support one another. We build enduring relationships, and work harmoniously towards a common goal. As long as we keep at this, we will overcome all difficulties.

Conclusion

As we mark this 65th milestone tonight with our tripartite partners, members and friends, I would like to take this moment to acknowledge the immeasurable help and support that we have received from everyone, in one way or another.

I would like to thank a very important group of people this evening. They are none other than our pioneer Executive Committee and members, many of them stood by us through the difficult years and contributed immensely to grow SMOU.

This dinner would not have been possible if not for our Young SMOU team led by Brother Terence Tan. All the video clips shown tonight are produced by Terence and his team. Can we have a round of applause for him please.

Last but not least, many thanks go out to our Guest-of-Honour Brother Chun Sing, Special Guest Brother Swee Say, our various overseas friends for joining us tonight. To the shipping companies and our members as well, thank you for supporting us all these years.

On an ending note, I am happy to announce our thanks to Brother Steve Cotton and the ITF Executive Board. The ITF will hold its 44th Congress in Singapore from 13 to 20 October 2018. This will be the first time the congress takes place in a Southeast Asian country after 120 years since 1896. We will warmly welcome all our sisters and brothers from all over the world.

Unitedly, let us continue to do well, do good, and do more so that we can Care, be Fair and Grow together. See you all in 35 years' time to celebrate SMOU100.

Enjoy the rest of the evening and thank you.