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SPEECH – IPS-MHA FORUM ON NON-VIOLENT ETHNIC HOSTILITIES

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Good afternoon.

I am, indeed, honoured to be with you today, to be a part of this important Forum.

I acknowledge all the distinguished guests with us and also each of you who are participating at the Forum. I thank the Hon. K Shanmugan for his attendance in gracing the Forum.

In particular, I thank the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Lee Kuan School of Public Policy, the Institute of Policy Research, the organisers of this event, Including Mr Mathew Mathews, Ms Sophy Tio and your colleagues who have worked tirelessly to make this Forum happen.

When I was asked to speak at this Forum I said to Mr Mathews that I was not an academic. I hold considerable respect and deference for the work that you do and for the contribution that you make. On that score as I walked into this room, I said to myself that, if I am the smartest person in this room then I am in the wrong room. There is much that I can learn from you, from each other, in the course of our discourses in the next few days, with the keen expectation that I could take back with me to Australia, ideas and insights that could assist to make Australia a better multicultural society.

I further, hope to be able to contribute to the Forum by being able to promote and elevate the importance and relevance of academic theories, concepts, ideas and research in formulating principles and precepts to guide the policies and practices in better managing and guiding the success of culturally and religiously diverse societies. I hope this Forum will lead us to identify issues and practices that help to formulate guidelines, tools and benchmarks to design and implement effective actions that serve to mitigate tensions and hostilities that exist in culturally diverse societies.

As I have only 15 minutes to speak, I will seek to offer only some broad insights and highlights into my talk, and hopefully have some more time during the Q & A session to follow up and follow through some of those issues. The views I express are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Australian government or of any of the organisations that I have been associated with.

Cultural Diversity is unique to each country

Each nation, including those in the Asian region, arrives at its contemporary culturally diverse state as a product of the forces, dynamics and matrix at play in the course of its development. I have used the term culture diversity or culturally diverse as a point of convenience to include all forms of cultural, ethnic, racial and religious diversity. That a country is culturally diverse is determined largely by historical, geographical,

political, social and ideological antecedents, that are in many instances experiences that are unique to that country.

It is also shaped by antecedent, but more importantly contemporary, political decisions, choices, objectives and values, i.e. how a country sees and deals with its cultural diversity.

Many countries are saddled with its culturally diverse demographics and must deal with it as it is. As well, countries seek to craft meaning and its national mythologies arising from the reality of its culturally diverse population.

Need to understand the cultural diversity experiences of each country

While every country has an element of cultural diversity challenges, some are more profound and pressing than others. For these latter countries cultural diversity issues incessantly occupy the forefront of national conversation and preoccupation. Afterall, cultural diversity, citizenship and national unity are critical issues that need to be addressed in a country's ongoing nation-building development.

Therefore, to understand the issues and challenges of cultural diversity requires an enquiry and understanding of the particulars of national cultural diversity experiences, particularly at the current point of the respective countries' national aspirations and prerogatives.

Australia, for example, is well regarded for its strong social justice ethos and egalitarianism with a focus on the 'fair go' concept. This background helps shape its approach to cultural diversity. Australia also has a very good human rights record whish has been deemed as the basic norms that make multicultural society possible.

What may be the needs, aspirations and prerogatives of a country for its culturally diverse population may not be the same for another country.

Different approaches to managing cultural diversity

Countries adopt different approaches, principles and cultural diversity management models that suit and meet their circumstances. They may range from approaches such as differential exclusion, a term that Stephen Castles, a director of the Refugees Studies Centre at the University of Oxford, used to mean accepting immigrants only within strict functional and temporal limits such as guest or foreign workers, for example, as a way of controlling cultural difference.

Another model that had been used, mainly up to the 1970s and 1980s but still arguably exist in different guises is assimilation, an approach whereby immigrants are directed to take on the social and cultural practices of the mainstream society in which they have settled.

A common characteristic of the differential exclusion and assimilation approaches is the view that immigrants with their differing cultures should not bring about significant

social and cultural change in the country of settlement and where governments through public policies and initiatives seek to prevent cultural diversity becoming a force for social transformation.

The multicultural model is familiar to many. It is a model adopted by countries like Canada and Australia. Gerald Kernerman in his article, "Multicultural Nationalism: Civilizing Difference, Constituting Community" said this of Canada, "In a remarkably self-conscious fashion, Canadians have made great efforts to incorporate an embrace of diversity into their national mythologies". I can't say with absolute certainty that Australians have made an equally 'self-conscious' determination to arrive at the same embrace of diversity as have the Canadians.

There are of course, hybrids and variants of the models that I've mentioned and it has not been regarded as inconsistent when forms of these approaches are found to exist side by side, with different permutations, in various countries. Many contain objectives that aspire to a homogenizing outcome for its society.

Cultural Diversity models are not static

Approaches and models adopted by a country are not static. They are capable of being abolished or subject to transformation. In its more than 200 years history Australia has transformed from a society that was captive to a form of differential exclusion, to full blown assimilation, to its present status as a multicultural society.

Multiculturalism: an ideal approach

In my view Multiculturalism is an ideal approach to express and manage cultural diversity. It is not a simple idea or concept and it is not without its complications or challenges. Even in the countries where it is the operating model there is likely to be deep reservation, disagreement and uncertainty about its benefits and about how to interpret or implement it.

The idea and practice of Multiculturalism involves aspects of tensions, and conflicts such as the need to balance social cohesion and unity against the demands and needs of cultural diversity. It is a term that is used in various ways in different contexts.

Multiculturalism, in short, is about the idea that every group is entitled to equal rights in society without being expected to relinquish their diversity on the proviso of an expectation of conformity to a certain set of key common and shared values. It is an endorsement of cultural pluralism.

Two fundamental elements of multiculturalism

Stephen Castles referred to two important elements of multiculturalism that are foundational to its existence; a "recognition of diversity' element which acknowledges the validity and positive contributions of a group's culture, identity, and language and

a "social equality" dimension which focuses on the equalization of opportunities for migrants and minority ethnic groups.

In a multicultural society like Australia, considerable attention, focus and resources are committed to policies and initiatives that aim to improve and strengthen the 'recognition of diversity" and "social equality" pillars of multiculturalism, overlayed with an overriding imperative to incorporate cultural diversity within an overarching framework of shared and common values, ideals, interest and goals to which all its citizens are committed.

The social equality aspect of Multiculturalism is concerned with ensuring equal and equitable opportunities, representation and participation of ethnic minorities. To that end government focus and actions are directed to both positive and negative initiatives. The negative initiatives include enacting antidiscrimination laws, the combatting of racism and addressing discriminatory conduct and behaviours. This is an area that had predominantly occupied my work as the Race Discrimination Commissioner though it had a larger role in its responsibilities that encompass social cohesion, social equality and the support of diversity, as well.

The positive aspect is focussed on supporting communities in recognition of and the rights to diversity, promote access to services, and to empower communities' capacity and opportunities to fully contribute and participate in society, as well as to promote unity, understanding and harmony among diverse communities. These functions are more relevantly attributed to the role that I previously occupied as the state of Victoria's Chairperson and Head of the Multicultural Commission.

Multiculturalism and democratic values

I believe that Multiculturalism thrives best when underpinned by democratic values. Of course, not all democracies embrace multiculturalism or multiculturalism to the full extent of its meaning, implications and potential. France, for instance, has a model of inclusion that is broadly based on the notion of individual equality and not on the recognition of cultural difference or minority rights. Equality before the law is the prerequisite for integration and citizenship where all migrants are expected to fully immerse in the French culture.

Democratic principles and values provide the conducive ground most able to nurture and support the demands and tensions of Multiculturalism through open, deliberative, inclusive and free discourses and conversations.

James A. Banks, the Kerry and Linda Killinger Professor of Diversity Studies and director of the Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington posit this phenomenon, "Only when a nation-state is unified around a set of democratic values such as justice and equality can it protect the rights of cultural, ethnic, and language groups and enable them to experience cultural democracy and freedom".

Banks referred to both Will Kymlicka, the Canadian political theorist and professor of philosophy and political studies at Queen's University and Renato Rosaldo, the inaugural director of Latino Studies at New York University, as having theorised this

phenomenon in arguing that in a democratic society, ethnic and immigrant groups should have the right to maintain their ethnic cultures and languages as well as participate in the national civic culture. Kymlicka calls this concept "multicultural citizenship and Rosaldo refers to it as "cultural citizenship".

There is a recognised view that in democratic multicultural societies democratic ideals and values and multicultural values and principles reinforce the strength of each other. It is a view postulated by Amy Gutmann, Laurance S. Rockfeller University Professor and provost at Princeton University, who stated that democratic multicultural societies are characterized by civic equality and that the important goal of citizenship education is to teach toleration and recognition of cultural difference. Hence, she maintains that civic equality, toleration and recognition (of diversity) are essential characteristics of a democratic approach to multicultural education.

Recognition of diversity and Social Equality are crucial to managing cultural diversity

The concepts of recognition of diversity and social equality are fundamental factors that should be given critical place in the discourse and in the planning on managing cultural diversity, irrespective of the models adopted by any country in addressing issues of cultural diversity within its borders. The effect and measure of focus on these two elements is a matter of the degree and form which such critical attention could be given in the context of the political circumstances and prerogatives of a country.

The quest for unity in most countries have often been pursued and achieved at the expense of diversity and social equality. Stephen Banks pointed to this undesirable outcome when he said, "Unity without diversity results in hegemony and oppression". But he was equally mindful to assert that "diversity without unity leads to Balkanizations and the fracturing of the nation-state".

Reocognition of diversity is more than just noting the fact of cultural diversity. It embraces ideas and commitments to principles of respect, understanding, inclusion, justice, fairness and in seeing cultural diversity as a positive asset rather than a burden to be dealt with.

Failure to recognise diversity and to include ethnic and cultural communities into the structure and fabric of the mainstream society with these cohorts attaining political, social and economic equality leads to alienation, marginalization, division, resentment, radicalisation and even to ultimate acts of violence against the society and state. A spectre not in the interest of nation building for any country.

Balancing competing demands

While a commitment to multiculturalism involves giving relevant and critical attention to recognising diversity and social equality there is always a potential for conflicts between the two requirements. Too much attention and resources given to one element may lead to the diminishment and neglect of the other. Often, it is not difficult

to perceive a situation where one element is played off against the other, whether inadvertently or by design.

A disproportionate emphasis on cultural difference (such as an unreflective overwhelming support for group difference activities) may reinforce and entrench social difference or act to mask a failure to progress social equality measures. Clearly, a successful multicultural policy must seek to achieve a correct and proper balance of the two elements. Achieving a desirable balance is a Herculean task for policy makers and practitioners, and may sometimes appear illusive, because of the rapidly moving and changing dynamics in the community and the frequent shifts in policy and government priorities.

Leadership by the state is important to guide the process and resolve competing claims and emphasis but active role and leadership by civil society and ethnic community leaders are equally essential and desirable in resolving differences and conflicts.

Cultural diversity and Unity

The lexicon for cultural diversity is not complete without social cohesion and unity. In fact, for some societies these concepts are synonymous because to them cultural diversity will always involve the question of unity or that unity is a precondition to the existence of cultural diversity.

I maintain that there is no inherent conflict or contradiction between affirming diversity and upholding unity. However, every country that is culturally diverse must be concerned with social cohesion and unity, wherein its citizens are required to reflect, incorporate and commit to an overarching set of shared common values, ideals and vision,

Balancing cultural diversity with unity, and in the case of Australia, with its democratic values, is the continuing challenge and conundrum for a culturally diverse society. Ethnic communities need to develop reflective, clear and clarified understanding of cultural identification so that they are able to better appreciate the nuances of how to develop better identification with the society and country in which they are citizens. Rampant nationalism, on the other hand, that diminishes cultural diversity and, over dominant unity and social cohesion emphasis are likely to alienate ethnic communities to the detriment of the unity objectives.

And, that is the space and conditions that policy makers operate.

For ethnic communities to "trade off" a more reflective, considered and clarified cultural identification position to progress the causes of unity, requires a reciprocal national commitment to ensuring the integrity of delivering on the required standards of justice and equality. This means in a democracy there are no or little contradiction in the ideals of democratic values and its practices, including in efforts to address racism and inequality. This point is well articulated by Stephen Banks in suggesting that ethnic communities are best able to contribute and foster "an overarching national identity only to the extent that it mirrors their perspectives, struggles, hopes, and possibilities".

Dr Sev Ozdowski, a former chairperson of the Australian Multicultural Council venture to say that, 'contemporary Australian multiculturalism must be seen as a compact or two-way street between the Australian society and newcomers that requires both give and take"

Cultural diversity as a philosophy and 'way of life'

In Australia the Australian Human Rights Commission in collaboration with sports stakeholders run an initiative called Play by the Rules. It is an education and information program aim at preventing and dealing with discrimination, harassment, child safety, inclusion and integrity issues in sport. Implicit in the aims of the program is the belief that there are acceptable and recognised rules of engagement and conduct when participating in sports that lead to and promote anti-discrimination and inclusion outcomes.

Likewise, in relation to the approaches or models that may be adopted to manage cultural diversity there is an assumption that there are rules of conduct and engagement by the citizens necessary and conducive to the proper and effective development and advancement of a culturally diverse society.

It suffices for me at this juncture to state that in Australia those "rules" are developed around the balance of the ideas of diversity, unity and democratic values. It remains the case that in Australia citizenship education has an important role to play, as is the case with other countries, in reinforcing its democratic political institutions that have equality, justice and human rights as dominant ideologies.

Multicultural education is equally important in reaffirming and furthering democratic values of toleration, acceptance and recognition of cultural diversity.

The important point that I wish to make is that cultural diversity or multiculturalism if it is to be properly rooted or sustained must be understood as more than just a policy or political concept. In an ideal world where there is full recognition of diversity, full expression of social equality and unity is at its peak, there will still be issues, including moral, cultural and religious differences, that will remain different and, seemingly, incapable of being reconciled. In a multicultural society if one starts to strip all that its citizens have in common and shared values there will always remain at least one issue that stands as a point of difference. Such is the nature, character and definition of cultural diversity.

How communities learn to live and thrive together at this point of what I call the crucible of difference, i.e. the point where differences in beliefs and practices may not be capable of being shared and accepted across communities, will determine the strength and resilience of its culturally diverse society.

The art of living with difference is a philosophy or a way of life (an expression commonly used in Australia) to which multicultural education should seek to teach and embody.

It is the real and urgent question posed by the late Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, (a respected and eminent philosopher and theologian) when he asked, "how do we live with moral difference (and religious difference) and yet sustain an overarching community?

In his book, The Dignity of Difference, Rabbi Sacks urged that in a "interconnected world, we must learn to feel enlarged, not threatened by difference". And, that we must take seriously the disciplines and constraints of the dignity of difference.

Rabbi Sacks suggested that conversation, a genuine form of respect, of listening, paying attention and conferring value on the opinions and views of others was an answer. That public morality in a plural society does not reside with a single dominant voice but is "a sustained act of understanding and seeking to be understood across the boundaries of difference".

Some have suggested that a new dialogue with complete openness, a willingness to hear and preparedness to receive understanding from the Other, unfettered by one's own agenda and preconceived notions and experiences was the mean to overcoming conflict and hostilities between ethnic communities.

I am going to quote Rabbi Sacks on aspects of his message that for me has been profound and illuminating in my own understanding towards the pursuit of sustainable cultural diversity.

"In a plural society – all the more in a plural world – each of us have to settle for less than we do when we associate with fellow believers". "Yet what we lose is more than compensated for by the fact that together we are co-architects of a society larger than we could construct on our own, one in which our voice is heard and attended to even if it does not carry the day. Just as community is built on the willingness to let the "I" be shaped by the "We", so society is made by the readiness to let the "We" of our community be constrained by the need to male space for other communities and their deeply held beliefs. Society is a conversation scored for many voices. But it is precisely in and through that conversation that we become conjoint authors of our collective future". "Conversation – respectful, engaged, reciprocal, calling forth some of our greatest powers of empathy and understanding – is the moral form of a world governed by the dignity of difference".

The answers to achieving a sustainable culturally diverse society does not lie just in the pursuit of recognition of diversity, social equality, social cohesion and unity and in reinforcing democratic values but in cultivating cultures, where citizens understand and subscribe to values and precepts that are thoughtful, reflective and respectful of community cultures and committed to the overarching values and goals of the country.

Petronilha Betriz Goncalves e Silva, associate professor at the Federal University of Sao Carlos, makes the important point that becoming a citizen is a process and that education must play a crucial role in facilitating and perpetuating the development of civic consciousness and agency within its citizens. Thought leaders, civic leaders and policy makers and practitioners therefore have a vital role in educating citizens to acquire the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills needed to function in cultural communities besides their own, within the national culture and community. The importance of developing and maintaining a culture in which citizens are able to

internalize cultural diversity knowledge, ideas and values to acquire a capacity for delicate balance of cultural identification and national identification and develop social spaces for intercultural communication and accommodation, cannot be overestimated.

It is a culture of understanding that means giving every other human being every right that you can claim for yourself, lived as a philosophy that establishes a rationale to a way of life based on the practices of recognising and respecting cultural diversity and toleration.

Cultural diversity; a national asset

I further wish to highlight the significance of recognising the benefits of cultural diversity as an important positive societal and national asset. We have often heard the phrase, "Cultural diversity is good for business". Research has shown that cultural diversity in society and at the workplaces are better for productivity, decision-making and financial returns. It also creates inclusivity, building workplaces with higher job satisfaction and brings unique experiences and different approaches to the table. Institutions, organisations, and businesses reap benefits when they embrace diversity. In Australian the term 'productive diversity' is commonly used.

In addition, "cultural diversity expression enriches all Australians and makes our multicultural nation more vibrant and creative" as stated in Australia's Multicultural Policy Statement 2011. It is generally recognised that cultural diversity adds to the cultural and social life of a society.

It is important to continually highlight and promote the benefits of cultural diversity to the society.

The law and cultural diversity

In my observation, States within the Asian region employ an array of approaches in managing cultural diversity, including many instruments that are legislative or regulatory in nature. The use of laws to guide, direct and sanction conduct and behaviours within the framework of a society's cultural diversity engagement or relations are not uncommon. Criminal laws and sanctions may often be applied, variously, for violations or breaches related to non-violent related incitement or incidents against social harmony or unity.

In this sense, such societies subscribe to a more prescriptive regime of cultural diversity management as opposed to a more descriptive cultural diversity approach such as in the case of Australia. Criminal laws and sanctions as prescribed in various Australian Crimes Acts are reserved for acts that involve incitement to violence. In most other cases of non-violent ethnic hostilities, the civil law applies and these matters are substantially dealt with by means of mediation and conciliation.

Australia in adopting ICERD specifically declared its reservation in opting against accepting Article 4(a) of the Convention, which deals with criminal law sanctions against the kind of matters that are race hate and discrimination related.

As I speak the Australian Attorney General is in the process of drafting a Hate Crimes legislation to go before the Parliament in response to recent reported increases of race and religious hate related messages and incidents. The resort to the criminal law as part of a solution in dealing with hate and race related matters is not entirely without precedent or perhaps, nearly as unexpected. The Multicultural Statement of 2011 states, "The Government has in place anti-discrimination laws and is committed to measures which counter racism and discrimination".

It begs the question, and in my view requires further consideration as to the place and desirability of the law, particularly criminal law, as an instrument in managing cultural diversity.

Managing cultural diversity: What and How

I will now briefly touch on the What and How of managing cultural diversity. Many speakers and discussions today have already focussed on the why of the existence and preoccupation by states of cultural diversity.

I wish to turn my attention to offer some reflections on the what and how aspects of managing cultural diversity with a focus on Australia.

Multicultural principles and practices in Australia are both institutionalised and communalized. They are adopted and practised at the level which is described as a whole of government and whole of society.

It is institutionalized in that every state and territory in Australia has in place Multicultural Acts of various forms with the exception of the federal government which defined its commitment to multiculturalism through frameworks and policies. Multicultural rights are also protected in Charter of Rights and Responsibilities adopted by the States and territories.

I would also describe the status of multicultural principles and practices in Australia as one having reached a state that is saturated and immersed in many levels and strata of the Australian way of life, but not quite embedded to the level some may desire.

The operational levers of authority and functions over multicultural issues are also fairly diffused and dispersed and does not necessarily reside only with the government. The Australian Public Service Commission is a body with responsibilities for the conduct and administration of the public service. It recently committed independently of government to a target to improve ethnic community representation in the public service at the senior executive services level who takes in staff of departmental secretaries, deputy and assistant secretaries standing. The APS Commission is an independent statutory agency.

Likewise, the Australian Human Rights Commission, an independent agency has the capacity to pursue human rights and antidiscrimination initiatives and actions independent of government and to hold the government to account on matters within its statutory mandate.

It is communalized through the process whereby much of the responsibilities and heavy lifting for the implementation of multicultural policies are devolved to the community and led at the community level. For instance, last year, the Australian federal government in seeking to address an increased in community tension arising from the Gaza crisis allocated $50mil to promote social cohesion, with the stated intention that $25mil would be granted to the Jewish community and the other $25mil to the Muslim community, to support the respective communities in their resilience and social cohesion efforts.

There is a general recognition and acceptance that the agency for the implementation of multicultural policies and practices should ideally rest with multicultural communities as they are the entities intimately and ultimately affected and regarded as having the greater understanding of the issues and solutions, as well as having the necessary grassroots mechanism and networks conducive to spreading messages and service delivery.

Community and community leaders' role and participation in meeting the needs and objectives of the two dimensions of multiculturalism i.e. recognition and social equality and in fostering social cohesion and unity are highly desired and valued. It is hard to imagine cultural diversity policies and programs could work well in Australia or have the required legitimacy and authority that is has, without the backing and support of ethnic communities and its leadership.

Community mediations at the grass roots level conducted by Human Rights bodies and community organisations and other alternative dispute-resolution mechanisms aimed at conciliation are highly productive at pre-empting and resolving community conflicts and disputes.

Migrant resource centres that are either run by private or community organisations are located across many states aimed at supporting migrants or newly arrived settlers, by carrying out government policies and initiatives but localised to grassroot community needs and priorities.

There are literally thousands of ethnic community organisations and groupings in Australia, and some of these organisations, including peak bodies such as the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia, possess considerable influence in carrying a voice to government in the pursuit of and advocacy of issues relevant to ethnic community interest and concerns.

In the social cohesion space, ethnic communities are encouraged, supported and incentivised to adopt inter-cultural, cross-cultural and interfaith practices, engagement and experiences. Thus, there will not be many places in the world where you could find expect to find a Jewish, Christian and Muslim Association comprised of gatherings of senior religious leaders across the Abrahamic faiths. Or, where Iftars (breaking of fast) during Ramadan being shared and held in different places and establishments from other faiths including those of Sikhs, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and Jewish faiths,

The goodwill, good faith, understanding and commitment of ethnic communities to cultural diversity, democratic values and principles and to basic values of toleration

and reciprocity must not be underestimated in building a culturally diverse society that is socially cohesive and united.

Arenas and processes of managing cultural diversity

Lastly, in terms of the work that I have been involved I have adopted an approach that had oriented my focus on four arenas, which I have termed as: constitutional (a society's legal and civic framework on cultural diversity), institutional (how its institutions embrace and practice cultural diversity), narrative (the public discourse and conversations on cultural diversity, including media) and community (its understanding and practice of cultural diversity).

And at the implementation level I have adopted a policy focus on five areas of cultural diversity operations that I have called the" 5Ps": namely, in the areas of principle, policy, process, program and practice. This approach allows policy makers, like myself, to develop a holistic overview on the state of cultural diversity and to concentrate resources on the areas that may require particular attention.

Conclusion

There are lessons to be gained from understanding that while issues surrounding cultural, racial and religious diversity and discrimination are matters of particulars that reside in national context, they are also universal in nature.

Principles defining a countries approach to cultural diversity are a critical determinant to the understanding of its national cultural diversity imperatives and guide the implementation of policies and initiatives to reflect the prescribed principles. For instance, in Australia, the national agenda to establish a multicultural society defined by the saturation and immersion of multicultural principles and practices is crucial to its success. And government are able to direct resources and priorities to where it matters.

In relation to models or approaches that may adopted in managing cultural diversity, 'recognition of diversity' and 'social equality' are critical elements to consider. They contain the seeds of social cohesion and unity because they provide for a minimum guarantee of protection to citizens of equal rights, fairness, inclusion and justice and reinforce a sense of belonging and inclusion.

Where there is an elevation of the interest and status of any particular group within the society it must not be at the expense of a minimal level of social equality standards and expectations for all other groups. For example, special attention and focus given to a group should not mean the deprivation or diminishment of other groups of their basic and fundamental rights to be treated equally and fairly. What those standards are will vary from country to country but there must be a consensus of what constitutes adequate and sufficient protection of rights to sustain the respect for diversity and the social justice of all groups.

It is invaluable if societies and states could also start seeing cultural diversity not as a problem to be dealt with but rather as an asset to manage and derive benefits.

I further reaffirm the clear proviso enunciated by Stephen Banks that diversity without unity leads to the fracturing of the nation-state. Commitment to the overarching shared common values of the society is a hallmark of a successful culturally diverse society. And, in the case of Australia its democratic values are invaluable in fostering the success of its cultural diversity.

For cultural diversity to be successful, have deep meaning and long- term sustainability, with all its attendant benefits, we need to look at cultural diversity development, not just through the lens of politics, economics, nationalism, security, safety or policy concerns but as a process of human endeavour, individually and collectively, in learning and appreciating how to live together in peace in a world of difference. The state and its institutions must lead and take responsibility to facilitate this education.

Even though cultural diversity is "good for business" and is a positive national asset and plays an important role in supporting social cohesion and unity, we must, in our pursuit of unity and social cohesion objectives towards nation building, continually remind ourselves that upholding cultural diversity is part of a larger human endeavour to promote justice and equality. We achieve the best and most fruitful outcomes for our societies when we recognise and honour the universal values inherent in the dignity of all human persons, with all their inherent identities.

Thank you.