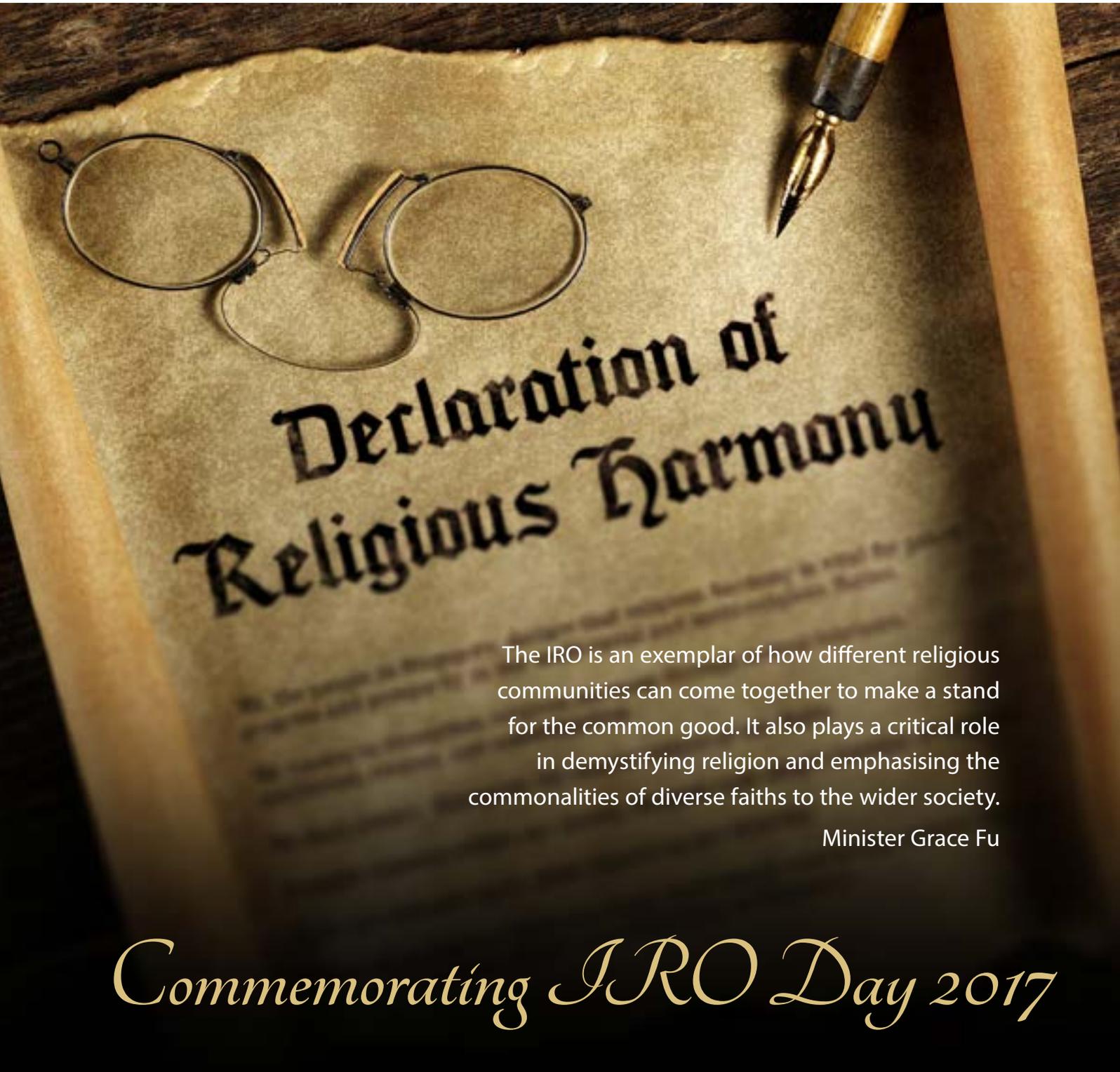


INTERFAITH



PEACE | HARMONY | UNITY

VOL. 1 NO. 3 MAR 2017
MCI (P) 163/10/2013



Declaration of Religious Harmony

The IRO is an exemplar of how different religious communities can come together to make a stand for the common good. It also plays a critical role in demystifying religion and emphasising the commonalities of diverse faiths to the wider society.

Minister Grace Fu

Commemorating IRO Day 2017

INTERFAITH

magazine

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INTERFAITH Magazine is an official publication of the Inter-Religious Organisation, Singapore, whose registered office is at 7 Maxwell Road, MND Building Complex Annex B, #05-02, Singapore 069111. For feedback, kindly contact the Editor-in-Chief at maricanlaw2@gmail.com.

GUEST-OF-HONOUR MINISTER GRACE FU

*Ministry of Culture,
Community and Youth*



FOREWORD

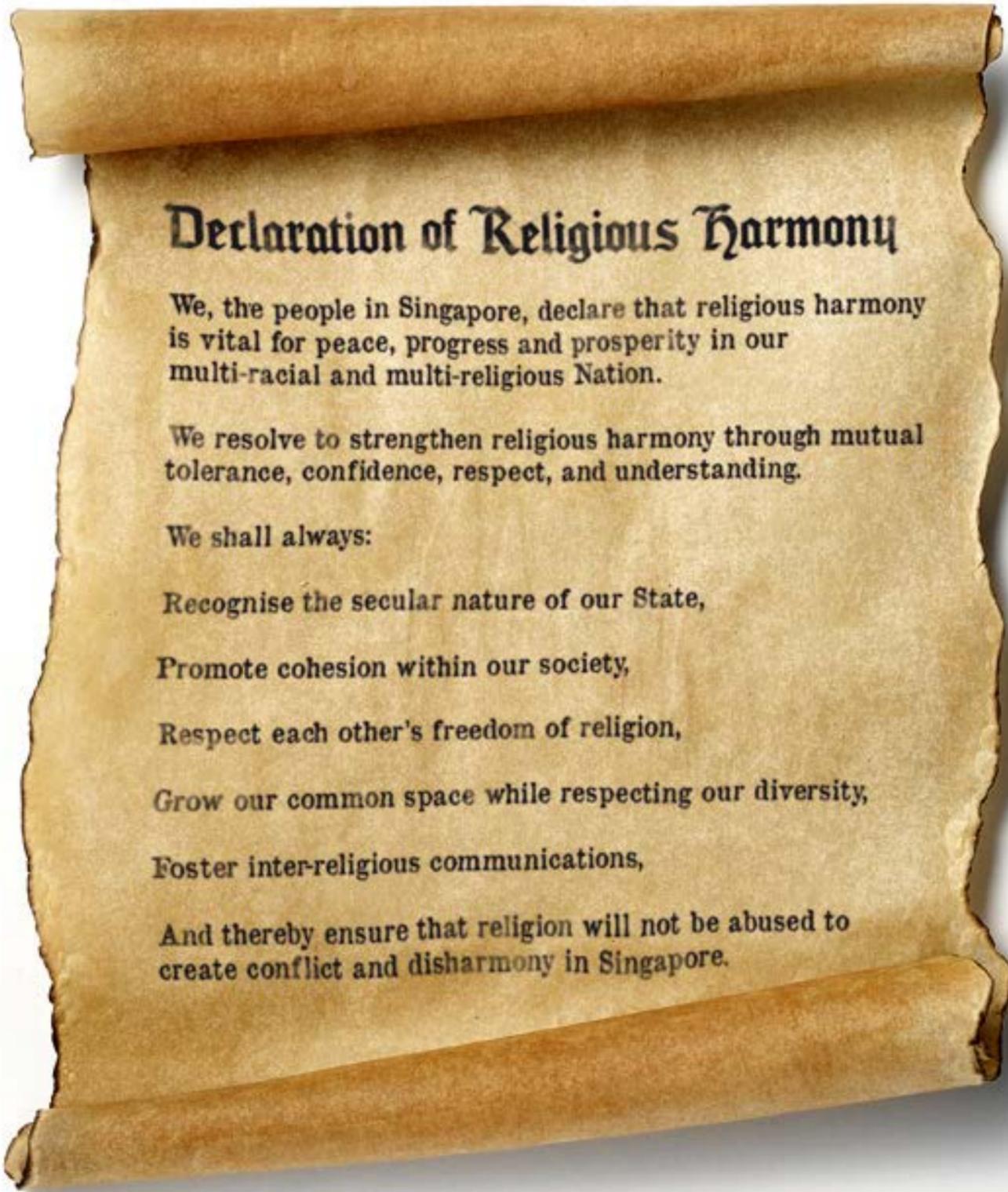
The Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO) epitomises the enduring spirit of Singapore and Singaporeans — mutual respect and understanding of different religions and cultures.

At a time like this, the importance of strong bonds of understanding and friendship between our religious leaders and amongst our fellow Singaporeans cannot be overstated. The threat of terrorism looms large. We must remain cohesive and resilient against insidious influences and extremist ideologies which can tear and destroy our social fabric.

The IRO is an exemplar of how different religious communities can come together to make a stand for the common good. It also plays a critical role in demystifying religion and emphasising the commonalities of diverse faiths to the wider society. With increasing religiosity in society, this role takes on greater urgency. We live, work and play in close proximity with one another and in the most religiously diverse country in the world. Differences in opinion and practice are bound to arise from time to time. It is imperative that there are safe spaces for us to

engage one another candidly and honestly on these sensitive issues. I am confident that the IRO will continue to stand, front and centre, in efforts to deepen religious understanding in this area.

I thank the IRO for your service in strengthening Singapore's inter-religious harmony over the past 68 years. May you remain steadfast and successful in your efforts and continue to play this important and constructive role in Singapore.



The Declaration of Religious Harmony was issued in 2003 by a working committee involving the national bodies of all mainstream religious groups in Singapore, and recited at the commencement of every IRO Council meeting.

IRO PRESIDENT RUSTOM GHADIALI

*Inter-Religious Organisation,
Singapore*



MESSAGE

Today marks the 68th year since the IRO was founded. It was the collective vision of a group of wise and religious men who believed in the achievement of peace and goodwill amongst mankind, through the promotion of mutual respect, assistance and protection.

In a fast-changing world dictated by the internet, social media and smart-phones, these have significant effects on our society especially the young. We must be careful, and protect and guide them with proper knowledge of

the religion and respect for other religions. We should not take for granted the peace and harmony that we have enjoyed.

The current security climate warrants conscious efforts to maintain good relations and better understanding amongst Singaporeans of diverse faiths and cultures.

Hence, the IRO is continuously initiating and supporting new interfaith initiatives to enhance the promotion of harmonious co-existence of our people.

SECURING SG BETTER

IRO pledge to enhance interfaith solidarity and social cohesion



Minister for Home Affairs Mr K Shanmugam, President Dr Tony Tan, Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security Mr Teo Chee Hean, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Ms Grace Fu, members of the Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO) and other guests at the launch of the Harmony in Diversity Gallery on 2 September 2016.

PHOTO: NizamNet/Ministry of Home Affairs

With the increasing global influence and challenges to Singapore's peace, security and harmony, it is the collective responsibility of the government, community and religious leaders to take the lead to invest in relationships — to go beyond just tolerance and build

proper understanding, confidence and trust among the different races and religions. Singaporeans must build an inclusive society and strengthen the common identity, and band together for Singapore's future. When everyone plays their part, this leads to a more integrated and socially-resilient community.

IRO Mission shall be to:

- Inculcate the spirit of the friendship and co-operation among the leaders and followers of different religions.
- **Work for the achievement of peace and goodwill among mankind.**
- **Promote mutual respect, assistance and protection among the adherents of different religions.**
- Conduct prayers and activities for the well-being of mankind as often as possible and convenient.
- **Intensify efforts in any other respect towards making the Organisation an effective body of friendship and brotherhood among the adherents of different religions without compromising any of his/her religious values.**
- Accept affiliation, if desired, from or with any Institution, society or association having objectives similar to those of the Organisation and to co-operate and work with any person or persons in furtherance of the objectives of the Organisation.

“ It has taken many years for us to build a cohesive society, united as one people regardless of race or religion. We must focus on what we have in common rather than allow others to divide us. ”

DPM Teo Chee Hean



Prayers for Nepal Quake Victims — Promoting harmony and unity through compassion

(right)

Collective Condemnation of Terror — Interfaith leaders from all major faiths in Singapore gathered to jointly issue a statement to condemn all acts of terror after the Paris bombings.



(far right)

Understanding Terrorism — Talks by experts were organised by IRO to acquaint and equip members with the knowledge of prevailing challenges.





(from left) Former Mufti Syed Isa Semait, Sister Janet Wang, Dr Maliki Osman, Mr Gurmit Singh, Reverend Dr K Gunaratana, and senior correspondent with Singapore's Channel NewsAsia, Sujadi Siswo.

IRO LENDS HAND TO GROUND-UP INTERFAITH INITIATIVES

Members help share insights and wisdoms on common practices and senses



In May 2015, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong cited the Global Religious Diversity Report which ranked Singapore as the most diverse nation, in terms of religions, out of 232 countries. Diversity is strength when properly cultivated and coordinated. But if left unattended, taken for granted or let to be manipulated, it would be disastrous. Singapore's interfaith fabric must be consciously and constantly monitored and nurtured to maintain and strengthen confidence and trust amongst the people of this most religiously diverse nation.

Origins of CSCS

Given the challenges of the global security climate and increased religiosity, it is imperative that the society must constantly and creatively seek ways to bring people together onto common grounds for the common good through common senses.

The 'Common Senses for Common Spaces' (CSCS) interfaith dialogue series seeks to encourage more interaction for a deeper interfaith understanding through the exchanges on key

and common religious practices, with the desired outcome that such engagement and acquaintance would help foster greater social harmony and trust. Incidentally, this is in line with two of the five pillars — social and psychological resilience — of Singapore's Total Defence framework.

The CSCS was conceptualised by Singapore's veteran humanitarian, Hassan Ahmad, who is a keen interfaith activist, a volunteer with Ba'alwie Mosque and

District Councillor of South East CDC (SECDC).

The CSCS series was adopted, scaled and sustained by SECDC as part of its three-tier pyramid approach to allow for more intensive and effective interfaith and racial engagements. It seeks to widen the reach, heighten awareness, and deepen understanding on the different faiths and cultures across various strata of society — by focusing on key commonalities within diversity.



Foreign dignitaries were teleported via virtual reality (VR) technology to the various holy sites including Mecca, Amritsar, Vatican City, and Jerusalem.



The inaugural CSCS dialogue aimed to foster greater social harmony and peaceful coexistence among Singaporeans by catalysing deeper understanding of key common religious practices which are commonly-practised, but which are not commonly-shared.

Singapore, 11 November — Kick-starting the Common Senses for Common Spaces series, the first dialogue centred on ‘Sacred Rendezvous’ — on pilgrimages to holy sites of different religions.

A panel of 4 respected religious figures, from the IRO, comprising former Mufti Syed Isa Semait (Muslim), Sister Janet Wang (Christian), Mr Gurmit Singh (Sikh) and Reverend Dr K Gunaratana (Buddhist), shared on their respective holy places and highlighted the common essences and impacts — mainly piety, purity and the embodiment of humanity — that motivate

pilgrims to embark on their spiritual journeys.

Interestingly, some holy sites of the different faiths share the same locations, like Jerusalem. The panel discussion was chaired by Sujadi Siswo, senior correspondent with Singapore’s Channel NewsAsia.

As part of the event’s highlights, an interactive virtual reality (VR) tour feature was made available where guests were ‘teleported’ to the various sacred places — Mecca, Amritsar, Vatican City, Jerusalem — to have an insight and sense of a religion’s holy site and setting.



The diverse audience comprising professionals, interfaith activists and youths from the social and corporate sectors, faith groups, IRCCs, schools and government agencies familiarised themselves on the key common consequences of pilgrimages — the fulfilment of piety and purity, and the embodiment of humanity.



IRO Council Member, Harbans Singh, contributing his knowledge and perspectives at the interfaith dialogue.



The experienced dialogue moderator, Sujadi Siswo, helped facilitate a worthwhile exchange of perspectives and clarifications at the Q&A session.

“ We may have different subscriptions of faith. But we must make concerted and concrete efforts to identify and understand the similarities within those differences that exist in our daily lives, and that which could help us bind even stronger as a nation. Improving religious cohesion is one of the cornerstones in strengthening our community vigilance, trust, intuition and cohesion, hence resilience. ”

DR MALIKI OSMAN
 Mayor, SECDC
 Senior Minister of State
 for Defence and Foreign Affairs



INTER-RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION, SINGAPORE
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INVOCATION (Prayer used at IRO Meetings)

O Lord, increase in us understanding and knowledge and set us free from the bondage of greed, hatred and ignorance, so that we may awake, arise and advance until the goal is reached, giving our bodies to work and our minds to the Lord.

May we work vigorously, keeping within spiritual discipline to bring peace in our hearts, peace in our families, peace in our cities, peace in our planetary home, the world.

May we learn to master ourselves, sublimate our combative energies into creative channels, and freely offer ourselves in the service of our fellowmen, and our Lord.

Help us, O Lord, to ever strive to keep on these lines to promote peace on earth and goodwill among men.

By Thy grace, may we all prosper.