

**WELCOMING REMARKS FOR
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
MANAGING URBAN CULTURAL HERITAGE (MUCH) 2018
BY
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INCORPORATED
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SRI MAS BALLROOM, LEVEL 4, BAYVIEW HOTEL GEORGETOWN PENANG**

(VIP Salutations)

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcome to George Town, Penang, the city of a multicultural built and living heritage that is rich, dynamic and organic. It is with much excitement for us in George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) to organise the International Conference on Managing Urban Cultural Heritage (MUCH) 2018, and your presence has definitely made MUCH, much more interesting.

The organising committee started planning and organising the conference since 20 December 2017. We received an overwhelming number of submissions during the call for abstracts, and we thank the 28 speakers and panellists, nine moderators and 130 participants, from 15 countries namely Malaysia, Japan, Taiwan, Myanmar, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Republic of Korea, Iran, Tunisia, Greece, Mozambique, Australia and the USA for travelling from your home, and taking time off from work to come to the heritage city of George Town, and to this conference.

As the site manager of the George Town UNESCO World Heritage Site, we face challenges and opportunities on a daily basis in regard to the management of this urban cultural heritage site, with a core zone of 109 hectares, and surrounded by 150 hectares of buffer zone area. It encompasses some 4,000 heritage buildings, with an average of 100,000 people living, working and using the site on a daily basis.

It has not been easy being the site manager for one of the largest cultural heritage sites in the Asia Pacific region, as we need to safeguard and protect our outstanding universal values on 1) multicultural trading towns, 2) multicultural living heritage, and 3) unique architecture and townscape.

Together with the stakeholders and local community, we experimented on various strategies to find solutions and overcome differences and difficulties, and we have grown together in the 10 years since we were inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site on 7 July 2008, together with Melaka.

As you may see today, GTWHI has grown into a proactive, productive and professional entity that manages, safeguards and promotes the site in cooperation with the federal, state and local governments, as well as local communities, organisations and associations through some 50

programmes and projects annually. To commemorate our 10th anniversary, a series of 23 activities have been conducted since January 2018.

In this process that requires a lot of work every day, we know that we have much to learn and many areas to specialise in. Therefore, with the support from the Board of Directors of George Town World Heritage Incorporated, and financial support from the State Government of Penang, and in collaboration with the Malaysian National Commission for UNESCO as well as the Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur, we are here today for this important International Conference on Managing Urban Cultural Heritage as the platform to share thought-provoking initiatives, to propose the synthesis of the hegemony of approaches in cultural heritage management, and to build a network of site managers, professionals, decision makers, and local communities in the management of urban cultural heritage.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Unlike GTWHI's other activities such as the annual George Town Heritage Celebrations with interactive workshops by the local communities, or the Cultural Heritage Book Gifting Programme in which we aim to gift 100 cultural heritage book sets to educational institutions to promote heritage education, this international conference is a catalyst for ideas, innovations and collaborations for individuals of different backgrounds and expertise to collectively discuss and safeguard cultural heritage in an urban setting.

As detailed in the Programme Booklet, I am proud to present to you a promising line-up of experienced and established speakers who will delve into key topics of Urban Archaeology, Globalisation and Sustainable Tourism, Disaster Risk Reduction, World Heritage Site Management, Education and Capacity Building, Conservation of Objects and Collections, Oral, Video and Site Documentations, Rejuvenation of Urban Heritage, and Online Mobilisation in Heritage Management.

We are honoured to have successfully invited two important resource persons for GTWHI and George Town as our keynote speakers. Prof Dr Rohit Jigyasu, who is the UNESCO Chair Professor of the Institute of Disaster Mitigation for Urban Cultural Heritage, Ritsumeikan University, Japan, will be speaking to us on "Disaster Risk Reduction for Urban Cultural Heritage Sites", followed by Dato' Dr Zainah Ibrahim, the Heritage Commissioner of Malaysia and also the Director-General of the Department of National Heritage under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia who will share with us on the "Roles and Responsibilities of the Department of National Heritage Towards the Inscription of World Heritage Sites (UNESCO)".

There are eight sessions of presentations, one site managers panel discussion, and a concluding session in this conference, with each session providing ample time for questions and answers, and as promised, a prolonged coffee break of 30 minutes two times per day. We will also be visiting the George Town UNESCO World Heritage Site on Tuesday afternoon. The five carefully curated site visits will open our senses as we explore and immerse in the multicultural and organic truth of George Town.

We look forward to the onstage and offstage exchange of ideas, to reflect the growth and progress George Town has made in the past 10 years, and bring forth constructive, progressive

and positive changes in managing heritage cities. I also call upon my fellow Penangites in the audience, to share in the pride of hosting our guests from near and far, to understand our culture, and to enjoy their stay in Penang. This is in particular to the local communities from George Town, who have always been supportive, and have taken care of and safeguarded the city with much passion, love and ownership.

And to all my dearest speakers for the conference, thank you for your selfless sharing of your expertise and knowledge, it is because of individuals like you that we get to improve ourselves. We will supply you with very good coffee, good food, and warm hospitality, all in Penang style to make you feel at home, and to gain some weight before you leave.

Before I end my speech, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the GTWHI Board of Directors, in particular the Chairman and the Chief Minister of Penang, Tuan Chow Kon Yeow for his strong commitment and support to conserve and safeguard our cultural heritage. Lastly, let us give a big applause to my strong team from GTWHI for their unfaltering efforts and hard work since December 2017, and in particular the last few weeks in making this conference possible. Teamwork makes the dream work, and thank you for being the best team one can ever have. Together, we will continue to move George Town forward.

Have fun, enjoy yourselves and may all of us have a happy, fruitful conference.

Thank you.