



YEARS

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HWA CHONG **ASIA-PACIFIC**  
**YOUNG LEADERS SUMMIT**

**STUDENT DIALOGUE**  
**WRITE-UP**

# AUGURIES OF GROWTH

What are the signs of growth?  
Who is part of this growth?  
Where are we heading?  
Why is growth unequitable?  
When does growth overwhelm us?  
How should we then manage growth?

These questions set the stage for the 2016 Asia–Pacific Young Leaders Summit, the Auguries of Growth. The summit welcomes dialogue and discussions on growth, and is driven by its passion to encourage young minds to respond to society. It seeks to connect young people and create deeper awareness about their unique role in strengthening lasting peace and equitable and sustainable development.

Advancing growth and developments in sciences, communication and information, education, trade and cultures indeed hold high stakes across the world. International communities today face the rising pressures of change and new challenges brought about by a period of phenomenal growth.

The nature of growth challenges differs across nations, and over time. For some nations, the challenge now is to overcome stagnation and steer the economy onto a sustained path of growth. For others, therein lies the pressing need to cement social cracks; address income disparities; restore human dignity and annihilate exploitation. Yet, some others have to deal with growing threats and vulnerabilities; reduce rapid environmental degradation; urbanise cities and modernise institutions.

Whatever the story, at the heart of it all lies – not mere digits or data – but the dynamic lives of people. Growth is about people, growth is about human well–being and dignity. Growth is about real stories of the victims and the victorious. We seek to explore and understand these stories, not to make immediate changes in mammoth magnitude. But simply for a greater sense of understanding, empathy, and to bring home a renewed sense of commitment, to be a catalyst of change.

More than ever today, lasting peace and equitable and sustainable development requires international cooperation and friendships. At the 2015 United Nations General Assembly, President Obama remarked that “We live in an integrated world — one in which we all have a stake in each other’s success. We cannot turn those

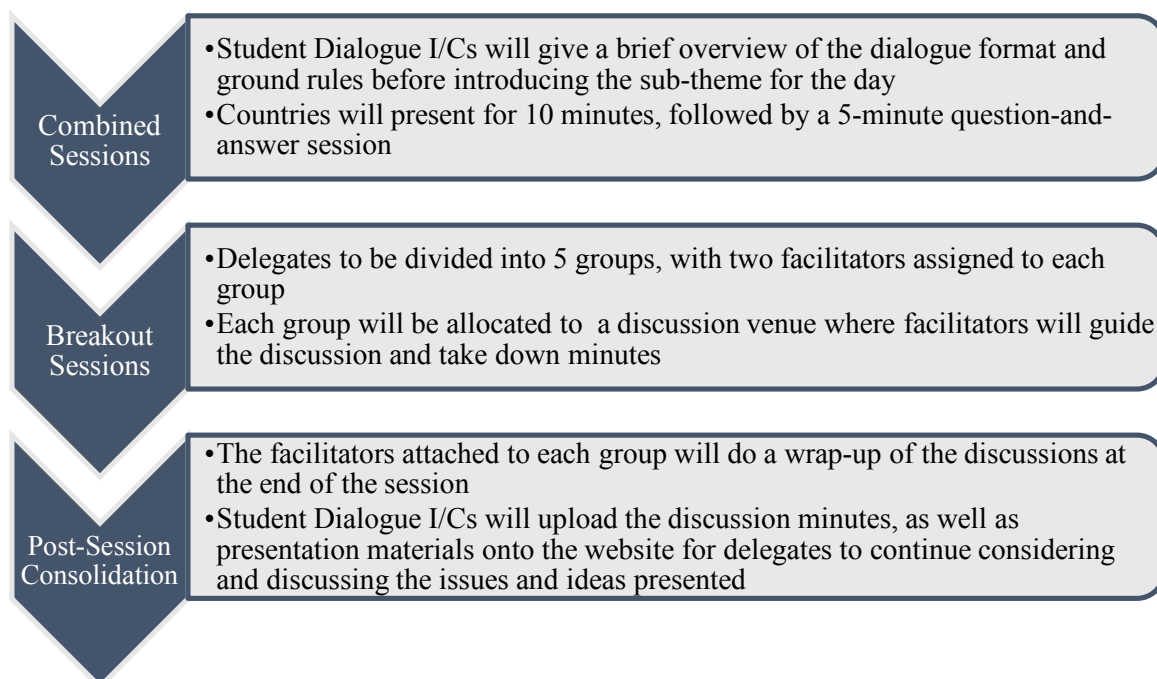
forces of integration... And if we cannot work together more effectively, we will all suffer the consequences.” The refugee crisis, the rising trend of extremism, vulnerable economies, tyranny of corrupt leaders, ideological and religious clashes, territorial disputes and expansion and new diseases plaguing the world are all challenges growing in force and speed.

Cooperation in these areas has never been more urgent. These cooperative platforms cannot be built solely on economic or political arrangements – they must be constructed in the minds of people and cultivated through friendships. The rights and dignity of every individual must be the starting point to measure the success of growth. Let us be reminded that growth has to be inclusive; growth has to be sustainable; growth has to be a win–win. Maybe as William Blake wrote, one can aspire...

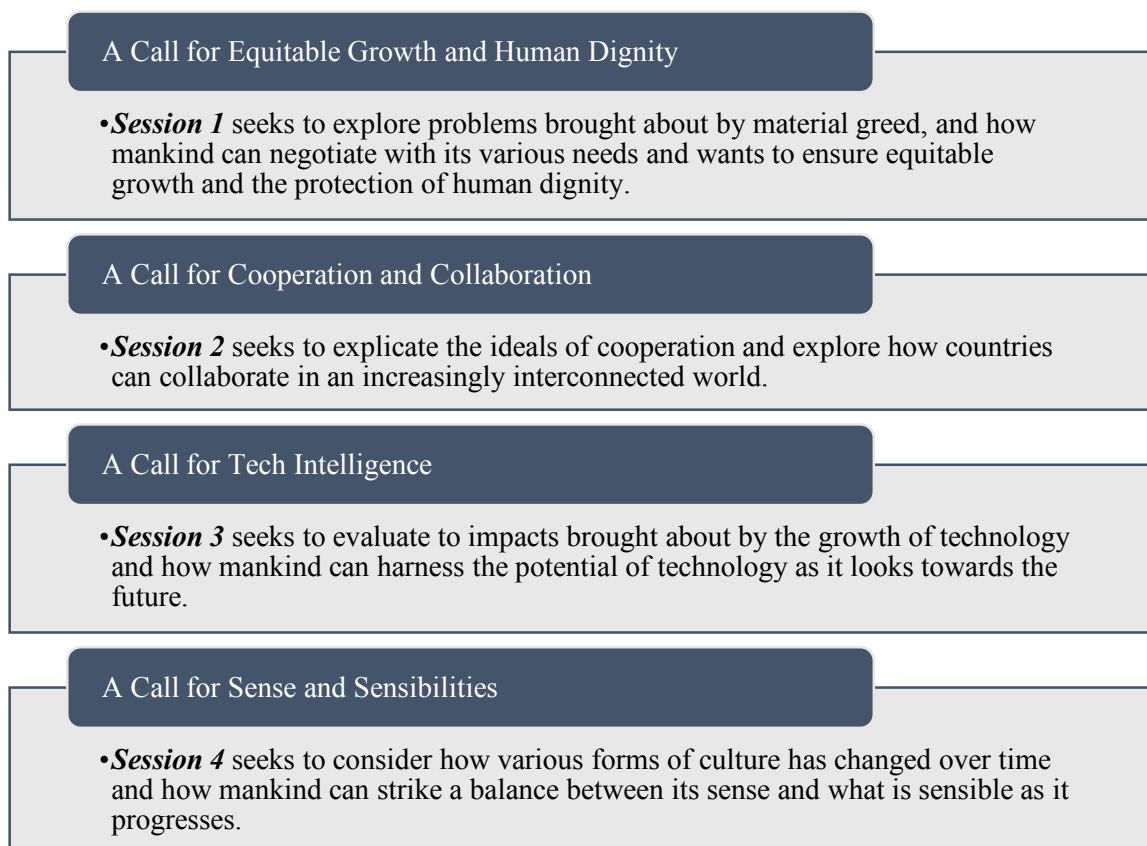
*‘To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour’*

Let the auguries of growth be good for all

## Concept



## Session Themes



## Topics

Session 1: A Call for Equitable Growth and Human Dignity	
Human Rights: The Right to Life	South Africa
Environment: The Cry of the Earth	Indonesia
Equality: A Level Playing Field	China
Session 2: A Call for Cooperation and Collaboration	
International Cooperation: The Road Ahead	United Kingdom
Transnational Intervention: The Audacity of Power	The Philippines
Diplomacy: The Smart Power	France
Session 3: A Call for Tech Intelligence	
National Security and Privacy: The Balancing Act	United States of America
Artificial Intelligence: The Monster At-tempt	South Korea
Internet: The Invisible Hand	Japan
Session 4: A Call for Sense and Sensibilities	
Heritage: The Soul of a Nation	Singapore
Sports: Taking the High Road	Australia
Diversity: The Melting Pot	Malaysia
Education: The King Maker	India

**Session 1:**

*A Call for Equitable Growth and Human Dignity*

*“We have always known that heedless self-interest was bad morals, we now know that it is bad economics.”*

*~ Franklin D. Roosevelt*

We have witnessed rapid economic growth over the last 50 years. However, as we charge forward in pursuit of affluence and material wealth, human rights and dignity are often sacrificed. Today, we see large multinational corporations exploiting people and resources; we see material growth at the expense of human dignity. As Roosevelt claims, greed does not merely corrupt individuals but it also cripples the economy. Growth has to be inclusive and it must confer every single member of the society with dignity, opportunities and his rightful place in society. To remain true to these ideals and values let us explore how growth can occur in an equitable, sustainable and inclusive manner.

## Session 1: A Call for Equitable Growth and Human Dignity

### Human Rights: The Right to Life

In 2013, a fire in a Bangladeshi factory, which produced Gap apparel, led to a probe into the working conditions in the company. The results were shocking. Workers received only around US\$3 for a 19-hour workday, despite working for a multinational corporation with huge revenue.

The problem of labour exploitation extends to all industries, from clothing to farming to consumer technology. In fact, Foxconn, a Chinese company that manufactures the popular Apple iPhone employed child labour, paying them meagre allowances for long hours of work. In addition, between 2010 and 2013, the International Trade Union Confederation reported that about 1,200 migrant workers died in the state of Qatar and some of these casualties were related to the massive drive to build stadiums for the 2022 World Cup.

Despite efforts by the United Nations Human Rights Council and non-profit organisations such as Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX) to combat human trafficking and exploitation, the problem continues to persist, with 168 million children subjected to child labour, all around the world.

It is imperative that the exploitation of labour, especially child labour is put to an end so that economic growth does not come at the expense of any one person.

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- ❖ What are the key factors which lead to exploitation of labour?
- ❖ How can the different stakeholders – consumers, governments, multinational corporations (MNCs) and international communities – cooperate to annihilate such forms exploitation?
- ❖ Study the level of exploitation in a particular context. Analyse the fundamental problems and propose feasible solutions.

## Session 1: A Call for Equitable Growth and Human Dignity

### Environment: The Cry of the Earth

Rapid economic growth has come at the expense of an exponential loss of environmental resources. More than a million hectares of forestland was cleared in Brazil and Indonesia to make space for farmland.

Beyond land and trees, other environmental resources are also mindlessly exploited for economic growth. In fact, oil reserves are at an all-time low, and countries are planning to drill for oil even in the Arctic region.

This is not a new problem and efforts in the form of global agreements to promote sustainable use of environmental resources are in place. The Kyoto Protocol signed at the 2005 United Nations Climate Change Summit and the 2009 and 2015 United Nations Climate Change Summit held at Copenhagen and Paris respectively, have set guidelines and obligations for countries. These agreements urge countries to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases in order to minimise drastic climate change. Despite that, the lack of political will have led to the ineffectiveness of such measures.

Environmental conservation and sustainable development will always have a place in the agenda of any major forums and discussions. How can we continue to push for greater awareness, responsibility and empathy towards our environment?

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- ❖ What is sustainable development? Discuss.
- ❖ How critical is sustainable development for human progress and growth?
- ❖ What in your opinion is a major obstacle for environmental conservation and sustainable development – the lack of political will or lack of social consciousness?
- ❖ Choose any one nation or organisation, which has made in-roads into environmental conservation or sustainable development and explain the reasons behind its success. What are the key learning points from this particular nation or organisation?



## Session 1: A Call for Equitable Growth and Human Dignity

### **Equality: A Level Playing Field**

We live in a world where wealth is unevenly distributed. Countries such as the Central African Republic struggle with a GDP per capita of around only US\$300 while others such as the United States (with a GDP per capita more than 100 times that of CAR) continue to flourish. Poverty is vicious cycle. Alarming data and figures shows how more than three quarter of the world's population do not have access to necessities of food, water and shelter, denying them their right to a dignified life.

Inequality of growth does not only happen between countries, but also within countries. In China, rapid development in the Eastern region as designated by the government means that the West does not enjoy the same economic progress. To make matters worse, the Hukou system restricts the osmosis of large rural population into cities. This is a problem that concerns large developing countries as economic growth is primarily concentrated in geographically advantageous areas, leading to certain areas seeing stronger growth than others.

Agreed, absolute equality is perhaps an ideal far from being achievable. However, should that stop us from striving towards better distribution of wealth and growth? Should wealth and growth only benefit the rich leaving a seventh of the world population below the poverty line of US\$1.25 a day? Or is there still room for greater responsibility and action towards the less fortunate today?

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- ❖ What are the setbacks of a widening divide between the rich and poor?
- ❖ Is poverty an inevitable feature of growth and modernisation?
- ❖ Build a strong case for inclusive growth. Refer to a model or a blueprint of a nation's success story; draw insights from it and propose strategies for inclusive growth.

## Session 2:

# *A Call for Cooperation and Collaboration*

*“We are all in the same boat, in a stormy sea, and we owe each other a terrible loyalty.”*

*~ G. K. Chesterton*

In today’s world, global cooperation is key to survival. For better or worse, humanity now finds itself in one boat, braving the stormy seas of change and uncertainty, and is bound by duty to each other. The growth of interconnected economies, the pursuit of global health and the pressing need for shared intelligence and cooperation to fight extremism and vulnerabilities cannot be exaggerated. These are real threats and real problems growing in scale and speed.

International cooperation is more than critical under these tumultuous conditions. As we navigate through these arduous challenges ahead, it is necessary to pause and consider the dynamics and interactions of global power.

In a world where boundaries are (arguably) virtually non-existent, citizens are far more aware and sensitive to geo-political and socio-economic changes and challenges. Hence, this session invites delegates to look at the traditional definitions of borders against the shifting parameters of the world, where we function not simply as individual countries, but as a global community.

## Session 2: A Call for Cooperation and Collaboration

### **International Cooperation: The Road Ahead**

International organisations, such as the ASEAN and the United Nations, have come under scrutiny and criticisms repeatedly for their inability to manage and mitigate global issues and tensions. Often, this inability can be attributed to the lack of accountability and commitment from member countries to act with resolve.

The recent surge of the refugee crisis afflicting mainly Europe and the Middle East has shed light on the uneven distribution of responsibility in the European Union. As of March 2016, Germany has granted more than 140,000 asylum claims, while the UK has only granted almost 14,000 (less than 10% of Germany's intake). Many call for more even distribution of the burden among the EU states, but because of the lack of willingness and/or ability to support a greater number of refugees, the migrant crisis remains unresolved. To date, any solution proposed remains largely elusive.

Therefore, it will be worthwhile for delegates to consider how international and/or regional cooperation and responsibilities are managed and how best to achieve it, in this context.

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- ❖ How important is international and/or regional cooperation?
- ❖ What guidelines and criteria should help shape international and/or regional cooperation and how can countries best achieve this?
- ❖ Should all countries bear equal responsibility (e.g. in the case of the refugee crisis), given that each country has its own set of problems and challenges?

## Session 2: A Call for Cooperation and Collaboration

### **Transnational Intervention: The Audacity of Power**

Interventionism is defined as an action or policy undertaken by a nation–state to manipulate the economy or sovereignty of another country. Intervention is abundant in history, with the conflict between western and communist powers being fuelled by continual intervention on both sides, in what would otherwise be domestic politics. Interventionism not only manifests itself as economic sanctions but also as political and military interference.

The justification of US military intervention has always been hotly debated, such as in Syria, Iraq and other areas of the Middle East. There are robust cases to be found for and against such military and non–military interventions. A prime example would be the rising tension over the South China Sea territorial dispute, which involves several sovereign states within the region. Despite not being directly embroiled in the dispute, US has asserted its own stance in the issue and even increased its military presence in the region, justifying its action as a response to Philippines' bid for international arbitration. While China's aggression is criticised, many also argue that the presence of US has increased tensions in the area. In light of these issues, delegates are invited to consider the rationale and impacts of transnational intervention, as well as the possible boundaries of such intervention.

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- ❖ Can government intervention into the affairs of other nations be justified?
- ❖ What are the consequences of such intervention?
- ❖ Is the pursuit of global justice reason enough to accept the intervention of major powers and has it helped to resolve issues?

## Session 2: A Call for Cooperation and Collaboration

### **Diplomacy: The Smart Power**

Diplomacy, the conduct of negotiations between state representatives, dates back to the Ancient Greeks and is continually evolving in its form and approach. Globalisation of the twenty-first century and the arrival of the digital age have signalled a turning point in diplomacy and international relations. Interestingly, in recent years international relations have incorporated unconventional strategies such as panda diplomacy, football diplomacy and even Facebook diplomacy. At its heart, diplomacy is about communication, negotiation and representation, whether practised between individual countries, through intergovernmental institutions or well-known organisations like the United Nations.

Many argue that the need for diplomats and ambassadors is declining, especially with shrinking government budgets and increased public scrutiny of diplomacy, leading many to despair at the countless seemingly fruitless multilateral summits. Yet, it can be argued that diplomacy is needed more than ever in this increasingly interdependent world, where countries wield soft power and battle on economic fronts rather than military grounds.

Given that diplomacy is key to managing an increasingly interconnected world, delegates are invited to analyse how diplomacy has evolved and how it will continue to grow in definition and scope.

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- ❖ How have methods of diplomacy changed in recent times?
- ❖ What are the challenges involved in maintaining diplomatic ties and how can they be mitigated?
- ❖ How do ordinary citizens impact the conducting of foreign affairs and international relations?

### Session 3:

## *A Call for Tech Intelligence*

*Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.”*

*~ Arthur C. Clarke*

As Arthur C. Clarke says, technology has advanced at such speed and intensity that it is difficult to comprehend the full impact of its pervasive nature. When the first Luddites smashed the machines that heralded the Industrial Revolution, they could not have predicted the ineffectiveness of their movement in the annals of history. The debate on the use of technology has since evolved from discussions on the use of machinery to how technology has become an integral tool to solve a myriad of problems. Technology has certainly expanded on our capacity for globalisation and future revelations in key areas. However, these benefits can easily turn out to be a liability for humanity. With the rapid growth of technology, countries have the responsibility to consider the adverse impact of these advancements and how best to mitigate them for the benefit of mankind.

## Session 3: A Call for Tech Intelligence

### **National Security and Privacy: The Balancing Act**

National security and technological advancements are terms we now use synonymously to explain, how nations display their sophisticated military weapons to fend-off any potential threats.

A good example of this is the notoriously dangerous nuclear weapons. While it is said to protect the country in ownership of such technology, it is undeniable that it poses a serious security threat. The Nuclear Summit recently held in Washington D.C is one of the many attempts to coordinate national and global efforts to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons and its devastating ramifications.

Terrorism is another real threat to national security. There is a need for countries to invest millions of dollars to beef up internal security. State of the art surveillance technologies are being implemented to sieve out citizens with malicious intent. However, these actions have now come under condemnation for encroaching into the citizens' privacy. The recent example of Apple vs the FBI is a good case in point that showcases the different priorities of the two organisations.

The undeniable challenge is to find that right balance between freedom and security. This is proving to be a difficult conundrum for many countries all over the world.

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- ❖ Will the world be a safer place without technology?
- ❖ Despite the numerous international summits and policies, why are weapons of mass destruction still major threat to global peace and survival?
- ❖ Should a nation prioritise national security over personal privacy? What will be the trade-offs?

## Session 3: A Call for Tech Intelligence

### **Artificial Intelligence: The Monster At-tempt**

Has technology superseded human intelligence? Should artificial intelligence be a cause for concern or should it be embraced in the hope for an even better future? This is the dilemma in everyone's mind.

Technology has become an integral part of our daily lives and it will continue to evolve as our dependence on it will only increase. Artificial Intelligence is everywhere. Growing in its bandwidth to accomplish unfathomable task it is certainly a monstrous attempt to revolutionise society.

When Bill Gates was asked how much of existential threat super intelligent machines pose to humans, the Microsoft co-founder and billionaire philanthropist expressed worries over its threat to human intelligence. Stephen Hawking also said that artificial intelligence "could spell the end of the human race." And speaking at the MIT Aeronautics and Astronautics department's Centennial Symposium, Tesla boss Elon Musk referred to artificial intelligence as "summoning the demon."

The merits of technological improvement are unquestionable. However, when some of the finest minds on the planet express concerns over the way technological intelligence is heading, should we not pause to think and reflect?

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- ❖ Has the ease of technology brought about a decrease in our cognitive abilities, or has it enhanced it?
- ❖ Recognising that technology certainly has its merits, how can we effectively harness technology in our pursuit of knowledge?



## Session 3: A Call for Tech Intelligence

### **Internet: The Invisible Hand**

The proliferation of technology has certainly enhanced our capabilities and our understanding of the physical world. In addition, the development of the internet has added a completely new dimension to human behaviours and attitudes.

On one hand, communication is seamless, efficient and faster than ever, and convenience is so readily available to us that technology is now more of a necessity than a luxury. On the other hand, according to a study, 92% of teens go online daily, with an adjacent increase (among other issues) in addiction cases and myopia among youths.

It is apparent that the digital age will not be ending any time soon. In light of this, delegates are to consider the changes and challenges it brings to individuals and the larger communities.

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- ❖ How is technology beginning to influence our attitudes and behaviours?
- ❖ Why is technology or the Internet referred as the 'Invisible Hand' of society?
- ❖ How is technology altering human relationships?

## Session 4:

# *A Call for Sense and Sensibilities*

*“Culture is our nature, and the ability to learn and change is our most important and fundamental instinct.”*

*~ Allison Gopnik*

Culture spreads across a wide spectrum. It refers to a set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours shared by a group of people, communicated from one generation to the next. As the world progresses, the concept of culture evolves along with it— expanding in its definitions and experiences. Today the complexities of growth has thrust the world into a period of ambivalence and contradictions. Culture – a learned behaviour, a representation of practices – is the compass leading modern world from the clutches of chaos to greater sense and sensibilities. It grounds societies, binds communities, refines the minds and enriches lives. It is paramount that we re-evaluate the fast growing dichotomy of cultures amidst a world that is soaring at blinding speed.

## Session 4: A Call for Sense and Sensibilities

### **Heritage: The Soul of a Nation**

The wave of modernisation has engulfed many cities and states, displacing places of historical relevance and importance. For many it will indeed, be foolish to choose conservation over growth and development. The need to transform is greater than ever.

In China, many of its culturally unique courtyard houses have fallen to the wrecking ball, causing the country to lose much of its cultural heritage. This problem is very pertinent to smaller countries like Singapore. When the government announced its plans to carry out construction projects in Bukit Brown, a cemetery housing around 100,000 graves, a national debate was sparked over it. The issue of heritage, traditions and sensitivity to the sentiments of people rose major concerns. Nevertheless, such large-scale displacements and destructions are inevitable and they recur to make way for growth and development.

Smaller countries are land-scarce and they constantly face the issue of competing land uses for growth and development. Should senses forsake sensibilities under such circumstances?

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- ❖ What are the socio-cultural impacts of redeveloping areas of historical and cultural relevance?
- ❖ How can nations strike a balance between progress and preservation?

## Session 4: A Call for Sense and Sensibilities

### **Sport: Taking the High Road**

Sport is an exhibition of the human spirit. Over the years, we have seen humans surpass their predecessors to reach greater heights in sport.

However, the use of performance enhancement drugs by athletes, known, as ‘doping’ has been a pressing problem in the sporting arena since the 1960s. Performance enhancement drugs such as anabolic steroids and testosterone help to improve the physical capacities of athletes. It enhances their endurance and performance both during and after sporting events or strenuous training sessions. These drugs do not only influence the physical capacity of sporting personalities but also have a huge bearing on their physiological well-being.

It is notable that at the height of doping, East Germany, amongst many other countries instituted large-scale doping systems to train its athletes to ‘win’ glory for its nation. It took home 11 out of 13 swimming titles at the 1976 Montreal Olympics. These high level-doping incidents led to the establishment of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

Over the last two decades, WADA has worked to promote, monitor and coordinate the fight against drugs in sport. To do so, it has created a comprehensive list of banned substances and has stepped up its effort to reprimand athletes and sporting personalities who transgress these regulations.

However, doping in sport has not been completely eradicated. High profile cases such as that of Lance Armstrong and Maria Sharapova has brought controversies about doping, back into spotlight.

Often, when athletes are tested positive for banned substances, the controversy about these substances being mere supplements versus performance stimulants arises. Under these circumstances, how can we ensure fair play in sport?

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- ❖ What is the purpose of sport?
- ❖ How has the sporting culture evolved over time?
- ❖ Is it possible to eradicate doping and is it even necessary to fight doping?

## Session 4: A Call for Sense and Sensibilities

### **Diversity: The Melting Pot**

In countries such as Brazil, indigenous communities still exist at the heart of the Amazon forest. However, today the process of urbanisation threatens their continued existence. In the case of the Brazilian Awa tribe, commercial activities such as logging have displaced their community. This is in many ways is the loss of one culture for the sake of another.

Commercial activities have also introduced alien forces and influences into the traditionally insulated life and culture of the indigenous peoples. It has resulted in the breakdown of communal life and has led to steady cultural death. Furthermore, poor assimilation and integration into the mainstream society has left these people lost and helpless.

While it is true that not all nations have such extreme examples of diversity, almost all nations in the world are becoming more cosmopolitan and diverse with a myriad of cultures and practices. The influx of foreigners, influence of technology and high level of transmigration are all occurring at an unprecedented rate. The issue of assimilation and integration is real for all. The question of compromising minority culture for the sake of the majority is a much-contested one in many societies.

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- ❖ What problems do nations with diverse communities face?
- ❖ Is it possible to remain a homogeneous society in this current age and time? Discuss.
- ❖ Embracing diversity means the loss of one's unique culture and practices. Do you agree?

## Session 4: A Call for Sense and Sensibilities

### **Education: The King Maker**

Oft debated, oft lauded and oft bemoaned, education is and has always been one of the most pertinent issues of any generation, given its vital role in shaping the future of a nation. With its enduring presence in the agenda of any progressive society, education has become so integrated and intertwined that it contours the attitudes and behaviours of the society.

The culture of paper chase, academic excellence and pursuit of education that confers the highest economic yields and social standing are ingrained in the minds of many societies. Singapore – a classic example of a meritocratic society – regards education as a social leveller. This has led to the growth of a highly intense and competitive culture. Many other nations such as Japan, China, India, Korea and even the US share similar predicament.

Delegates are invited to explore various education systems and explain how it has influenced their society.

Delegates can consider the following questions:

- ❖ What is the purpose of education?
- ❖ How has growth and development affected the culture and practices of education?
- ❖ How does education affect and influence the culture and practices of a nation?