

## **JOINT NEWS RELEASE**

Total: 6 pages including this page

Singapore, 7 July 2022

### **NTU Singapore hosts first post-pandemic meeting of APRU to address challenges on sustainability, climate change, and rising protectionism**

Leaders in higher education across the Pacific Rim are gathering in Singapore at **Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU) 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Presidents' Meeting** to discuss the critical issues of sustainability and climate change, how to prevent the next pandemic, and the urgent need to collaborate in a post-COVID-19 world that is seeing a rising trend in protectionism.

The Annual Presidents' Meeting is its first in-person meeting since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, with over 90 university leaders attending from 6 to 9 July.

Hosted by **Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU Singapore)**, the theme of this year's meeting is titled "Reconnecting in a Sustainable World", with four key topics to be discussed:

- 1) Responses to Crisis in a Diverse Region
- 2) Sustainability and Climate Change
- 3) Preventing the Next Pandemic
- 4) Reconnecting: The Urgency for Collaboration

In a world where countries are looking inwards, with some adopting isolationist policies to curb the adverse health and economic impact in a post-COVID-19 era, there is now an even greater impetus for universities to connect and collaborate.

**NTU Singapore President Professor Subra Suresh** said, "This year's meeting will highlight the most urgent and relevant issues facing the Association of Pacific Rim Universities and what actions need to be taken to strengthen our universities individually and collectively in a post-pandemic world. Fostering sustainability and climate action will be central to our discussions."

**Chair of APRU and Chancellor for the University of California, Los Angeles, Professor Gene Block**, said: "Amidst the uncertainties of a lingering pandemic,

deepening inequality, and rising geopolitical tensions, APRU remains a critical, neutral platform for taking on some of the most challenging issues of our time.”

“Our network facilitates critical international collaborations between our members and a wide range of partners. At this year’s meeting, we will determine actionable tactics that will be incorporated into APRU’s strategy for helping shape a sustainable future.”

For instance, for pandemic prevention, universities can advance their collaboration in vaccine and diagnostics development for new strains of viruses, new variant detection technologies, and data sharing, as exports of biological samples, are highly controlled.

At the meeting’s opening keynote session moderated by Professor Suresh, prominent banker **Mr. Piyush Gupta, Chief Executive Officer and Director of DBS Group**, spoke on sustainability, the role of corporations in pursuing the sustainability agenda, and potential areas of partnership with academic institutions.

With sustainability and climate change high on the agenda of the influential gathering, research information and historical data can be shared to build a more comprehensive model of climate change and its effects across the Pacific Rim. At the same time, sustainable development models and the application of artificial intelligence to optimise energy efficiency and resources can be test bedded across different communities.

The **APRU Annual Report 2022** will also be unveiled at the meeting, highlighting APRU institutions’ actions and collaborations throughout the pandemic and amid continuing global geopolitical tensions.

During this time, APRU members have engaged in a wide range of activities, many related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including climate change, health, disaster risk reduction, student mobility, gender equity, sustainability, artificial intelligence, indigenous knowledge, and anti-Asian hate. (Read report: [link](#))

Owing to the global importance of the research relationship between China and the US, APRU will launch at the Annual Presidents’ Meeting a joint report with Elsevier entitled ***For the Global Common Good: APRU and the China-US Research Landscape***. The report highlights the importance of maintaining research collaborations especially on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. (Read report: [link](#); Read infographic: [link](#))

Two white papers by NTU Singapore will also be presented. The first is a ***Report on NTU’s Carbon Footprint Framework and Roadmap***, which provides a framework for transparent measurement of NTU’s carbon footprint.

The second is a ***Report on Resilient Universities during the COVID-19 pandemic; Differences between East and West***, which highlights the best practices by universities in various countries in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to these four reports, plans for the APRU SDG Education for Global Citizenship Program will be presented by the **President of Chulalongkorn University in Thailand, Professor Bundhit Eua-arporn**, and **the Vice-Chancellor and President of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Professor Rocky Tuan**. This new certificate program, co-designed with Kyushu University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Simon Fraser University, and Universiti Malaya, will be launched in November 2022.

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***About Nanyang Technological University, Singapore***

A research-intensive public university, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU Singapore) has 33,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students in the Engineering, Business, Science, Medicine, Humanities, Arts, & Social Sciences, and Graduate colleges.

NTU is also home to world-renowned autonomous institutes – the National Institute of Education, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Earth Observatory of Singapore, and Singapore Centre for Environmental Life Sciences Engineering – and various leading research centres such as the Nanyang Environment & Water Research Institute (NEWRI) and Energy Research Institute @ NTU (ERI@N).

Under the NTU Smart Campus vision, the University harnesses the power of digital technology and tech-enabled solutions to support better learning and living experiences, the discovery of new knowledge, and the sustainability of resources.

Ranked amongst the world's top universities, the University's main campus is also frequently listed among the world's most beautiful. Known for its sustainability, over 95% of its building projects are certified Green Mark Platinum. Apart from its main campus, NTU also has a medical campus in Novena, Singapore's healthcare district.

For more information, visit [www.ntu.edu.sg](http://www.ntu.edu.sg).

### ***About APRU***

As a network of 60 leading universities linking the Americas, Asia, and Australasia, APRU brings together thought leaders, researchers, and policy-makers to exchange ideas and collaborate on practical solutions to the challenges of the 21st century. They leverage their members' collective education and research capabilities into the international public policy process. In the post-pandemic era, their strategic priorities focus on providing a neutral platform for high-level policy dialogue, taking actions on climate change, and supporting diversity, inclusion, and minorities. APRU's primary activities support these strategic priorities with a focus on critical areas such as disaster risk reduction, women in leadership, indigenous knowledge, virtual student exchange, esports, population aging, global health, sustainable cities, artificial intelligence, waste management, and more.

To learn more about APRU, please visit [www.apru.org](http://www.apru.org).

## **ANNEX A**

### **List of University Presidents attending the 2022 meeting in Singapore**

- 1) Professor Gene D. BLOCK, Chancellor, University of California, Los Angeles, USA; APRU Chair
- 2) Professor Gary S. MAY, Chancellor, University of California, Davis, USA
- 3) Professor Kim A. WILCOX, Chancellor, University of California, Riverside, USA
- 4) Professor Carol L. FOLT, University of Southern California, USA
- 5) Professor Subra SURESH, President, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
- 6) Professor TAN Eng Chye, President, National University of Singapore
- 7) Professor Bundhit EUA-ARPORN, President, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
- 8) Professor Kohei ITOH, Keio University, Japan
- 9) Professor Naoshi SUGIYAMA, Nagoya University, Japan
- 10) Professor Hideo OHNO, Tohoku University, Japan
- 11) Professor Jin Taek CHUNG, Korea University, Korea
- 12) Professor CHA Jeong-In, Pusan National University, Korea
- 13) Professor OH Se-Jung, Seoul National University, Korea
- 14) Professor Joy JOHNSON, Simon Fraser University, Canada
- 15) Professor Rocky S. TUAN, The Chinese University of Hong Kong; APRU Vice-Chair
- 16) Professor Xiang ZHANG, President and Vice-Chancellor, The University of Hong Kong
- 17) Professor Dawn FRESHWATER, Vice-Chancellor, The University of Auckland, New Zealand
- 18) Professor Mohd. Hamdi Abd. SHUKOR, Vice-Chancellor, Universiti Malaya, Malaysia

## **ANNEX B**

The ***Report on Resilient Universities during the COVID-19 pandemic: Differences between East and West***, authored by NTU's Institute of Science and Technology for Humanity (NISTH), highlights the best practices and responses of universities, such as the quick shutdown of campuses in China, the smooth deployment of safety measures and revised planning of research activities in Singapore and Australia, financial support of staff and students rolled by American and European universities, as well as the extensive leverage of partnerships by African and South American universities.

The report showcases findings from in-depth assessments of publicly available data of eight universities, which include:

- Nanyang Technological University (Singapore),
- Tsinghua University (China),
- Chinese University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong),

- University of Sydney (Australia),
- University of Rwanda (Rwanda),
- Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education (Mexico),
- Stanford University (US),
- and Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (Switzerland).

The report identifies three broad trends determining a university's ability to adapt, react and recover quickly in a pandemic.

- 1) Universities with recent investments in digital transformation were able to quickly switch to online learning when campuses were closed, which reduced disruption to student learning.
- 2) The ability to leverage globalisation and international partnerships, such as partnering with industry to develop vaccines and treatment and finding external sources of funding to keep the research going when national research budgets are being cut.
- 3) Preparing for the best and worst, where previous crises like the global financial crisis of 2008 saw a cut in government funding and a rise in enrolment, COVID-19 saw the reverse, where the government increased research investments. Still, student enrolment dropped due to the difficulties of cross-border travel.

The **NTU Carbon Footprint Framework for Universities** offers insight into current approaches and frameworks that are developed and adopted by universities worldwide to measure their carbon footprint (CFP).

Prepared by NTU Sustainability Office in collaboration with NTU Institute of Science and Technology for Humanity (NISTH), the report assessed available CFP measuring tools and analysed contributing emissions sources that are specific to universities.

It evaluated university rankings and their underlying parameters, the homogeneity of CFP information as reported by universities, the contribution of emission sources to total CFP, a study of specific approaches implemented by universities to reduce carbon emissions and identified key factors that influenced a university's overall CFP.

The uniqueness of every university makes it to standardise the measurement of carbon emissions, so the report provides the framework used by NTU to measure CFP, which can be a reference for universities worldwide.

This framework suggests the inclusion of the parameter of CFP data transparency that allows for CFP offsetting, thus incentivising universities to report all emission sources. It also suggests strategies for behavioural change and how to overcome the current gaps in collecting CFP-relevant information for universities.

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