

Welcome Greetings by

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**The 9th International Symposium on Catastrophe Risk Management –
“Closing the Protection Gap – Challenges and Opportunities”**

9:00 am, Tuesday, 7 August 2018
Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel, Singapore

Good morning!

Professor Haresh Shah, Founding Chairman of the International Advisory Board (IAB), Institute of Catastrophe Risk Management (ICRM), Nanyang Technological University (NTU),

Members of ICRM IAB – Mr Malcolm Steingold, Mr Rowan Douglas and Kenrick Law,

Distinguished Speakers, Delegates and Guests,

NTU Colleagues and Students,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of ICRM at NTU, I would like to extend our warm welcome to everyone to the 9th International Symposium on Catastrophe Risk Management, “**Closing the Protection Gaps – Challenges and Opportunities**”. To our guests from overseas, welcome to Singapore!



Setting Symposium Theme

As a tradition, we look around the world around us at each ICRM Annual Symposium. Year 2017 seems to see the largest amount of insured losses. In 2011, the market witnessed a record-high natural catastrophe loss of USD 120 billion. Since then, the market has witnessed a trend in loss reduction until last year 2017, when the nat cat loss of USD 143 billion reversed the trend, resulting from Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria.

This year appears to be a disaster-active year. There are ongoing massive forest fires in California and devastating draught in Australia, while heat waves around the world have been creating record-breaking high temperatures. Just two days ago, Lombok Indonesia was struck by a major earthquake. It is against the constantly emerging risks and ever-increasing losses that we select and set the main theme of ICRM Symposium every year.

ICRM Symposia

Since January 2010, ICRM has held eight international symposia on catastrophe risk management. The eight symposium themes are:

- “Public-Private Partnership in Understanding, Communicating and Managing Catastrophe Risk” in 2010,
- “Climate Change – Implications on Food & Water Security” in 2011,
- “Black Swan Events” in 2012,
- “Evolving Risks due to Extreme Events in Asia-Pacific” in 2013,
- “Financing of Natural Catastrophes in Asia” in 2014,
- “MegaCities of Asia and their Evolving Risks – Are these Risks Manageable?” in 2015,
- “Plugging the Natural Catastrophe Data Gap – Thoughts to Action for NatCatDAX” in 2016, and
- “Managing Risk & Resilience – Nat Cat Data (Exposure and Loss)” in 2017.

Today, we have the 9th Symposium on ***Closing the Protection Gaps – Challenges and Opportunities***. The symposium theme reflects ICRM’s current endeavours together with the financial industry, supported by MAS.



Symposium Sub-Themes

In discussing the main symposium theme of *Closing the Protection Gaps*, we have structured the Symposium in 3 sub-themes. They are: 1) Reducing the Protection Gap – Cross National Views, 2) Risk Pooling – Regional Views, and 3) Enabling Parametric Risk Transfer Solutions.

As we discuss *Protection Gaps* throughout the day today, I hope that we will understand better the *Causes of the gaps*. Better understanding of the Causes enables us to identify the *Characteristics of the gaps*, which should include not only financial and economic factors, but also culture and environmental factors.

With a clear understanding of the *Causes* and the *Characteristics* of Protection Gaps, it is then possible to *Close* the protection gaps by using *Technology* and involving *Government*. Using *Technology* as a tool could help bridge the gap by reducing costs for underwriting at the front-end and for claims at the back-end. Involving *Government* as a partner could increase product affordability through providing subsidies to lower-income citizens.

ICRM R&D Work

Some of you may have noticed that the *Symposium Program* has been reduced from 2 days to 1 day for the first time. With this change, we are running short of time slots for talks on ICRM's research programs and development projects. Therefore, we have put up 12 Posters in the entrance area behind you. The posters showcase the current work by our PhD students, Research Fellows and Research Associates. They will be on display for the whole day. I want to encourage all of you to stop by during the tea breaks and lunch time to chat with our students and staff for their very exciting new work on: *NatCatDAX Databases, Urban Expansion Theory, and Loss Estimate*.

Appreciation

As I look across the room, I have special feelings for this Grand Ballroom, because ICRM held its first inaugural symposium in January 2010 at this ballroom. That first symposium had a fabulous dinner hosted by the late Singapore President SR Nathan at the Istana. At this same ballroom in

January 2010, ICRM was launched by Mr Heng Swee Keat who was Managing Director of MAS then and is now Minister for Finance. Since then, ICRM has received very encouraging support from the government as well as the financial industry in its R&D activities in catastrophe risk management.

I would also want to take this opportunity to thank Prof Haresh Shah, Founding Chairman of ICRM's International Advisory Board, who has helped us over the years to shape ICRM's strategic directions and guided ICRM's development. All the success and achievements of ICRM today is largely to his credit.

Actually, Professor Shah is more than an IAB Chairman to me personally. For over 20 years, he has been my mentor not only for academic research but also for university administration. If not for his persuasion, I would not have taken on the challenging job as Dean of Engineering at NTU that was responsible for 500 professors, 1,000 staff, and 16,000 students.

As we are gathering at this very special ballroom, I would also want to let you know that today is an even more special day – ***today is Professor Shah's Birthday!***

Happy Birthday to you, Haresh! Many, many more returns!

Closure

Now, the only thing left for me is to thank you all for joining us at the 9th Symposium on ***Closing the Protection Gaps – Challenges and Opportunities.***

I wish all of you a fruitful time at the Symposium.

Thank You!