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SPEECH BY MS GRACE FU, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF ITE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SEMINAR, ON MONDAY 22 JUNE 2009, AT 0900 HRS, AT AUDITORIUM, LEVEL 3, ITE COLLEGE EAST

The Honourable Andrew Leung Kwan Yuen
Chairman of Vocational Training Council, Hong Kong

Mr Bob Tan
Chairman, ITE Board of Governors

Mr Bruce Poh
Director & CEO, ITE

Members of the ITE Board of Governors and Hong Kong's Vocational Training Council

Officials from the Embassies of the Federal Republic of Germany and the People's Republic of China

Seminar Speakers

Overseas delegates

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Introduction

1 Good morning. I am glad to be here with you this morning for the Opening Ceremony of the ITE International Student Seminar 2009. To our overseas delegates, I extend a warm welcome to all of you. I am confident that ITE, as host organisation, will fully extend our Singaporean warmth and hospitality to make your stay an enriching and memorable one.

A Global Education for Youth

- 2 Although we come from many different countries, we do have one common belief – that we see in the future, a more globalised world where our youths will have greater influence on each other and on our future. It is therefore common to find in the education policies of countries around the world a focus on value-based programmes to nurture our youths. This is critical to maintaining each nation’s social fabric and cohesion. Given the important role our younger citizens play now and in the future, it is essential that they are engaged with the society and develop a deep understanding of the problems and challenges that we face today. It is important that the right values and moral judgement are imbued from a young age. This holistic approach to education, as reflected in ITE’s “Hands-on, Minds-on, Hearts-on” philosophy, is also in line with what the Ministry of Education desires for its students.

- 3 Indeed our youth are growing up in an increasingly globalised society. Many of them have travelled, lived or even worked overseas. They are networked across the globe through the internet, playing games with people from different countries in different time zones at the same time; they are influenced by popular culture that is transmitted instantaneously across borders without passports without censorship. It is therefore increasingly important for education systems and their institutions to create opportunities for young people to appreciate and understand cultural differences and diversity in working towards common goals.

- 4 The ITE International Student Seminar is an exciting platform for our youths to reflect on current global issues and enhance their interest in shaping the society. This year's Seminar will see the participation of about 600 delegates, with nearly 300 foreign participants from Australia, Canada, Germany - as well as the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (or SAR) with the largest contingent of 250 students. This offers an excellent opportunity for participants to forge cross-cultural friendships and broaden their perspectives through interaction and the exchange of ideas.

Empowered to Bring About Change

- 5 Over the next three days, participants will have the chance to explore different aspects of the Seminar theme – ***Youth to the Power of Our Future***. As you reflect on global issues and your role as an individual within a community, I hope you will come to realise the potential that your generation holds to shape and impact the future of society.
- 6 I would like to suggest 3 'C's which you may find helpful in thinking through the issues raised during the Seminar.

The first 'C' stands for **Challenges**. You may ask, what are the social, environmental and economic challenges faced by countries around the world today?

The second 'C' is **Changes**. In light of these challenges, what are some positive changes that you would like to make in your campuses, communities and country?

And for the third 'C', **Community**, ask yourself, how can you play a part and engage others in your community to bring about the changes that you would like to make?

- 7 To illustrate this, I would like to share some of the noteworthy projects that emerged from the 2007 International Student Seminar, hosted by Hong Kong's Vocational Training Council.

- 8 Conceptualised by a group of students from ITE College East, 'Project Green Bank' is a '2-in-1' recycling project using reverse vending machine (RVM) mechanics to encourage people to recycle used aluminium cans and plastic bottles, with the proceeds donated to support charitable organisations. A distinctive feature of the machine is an interactive LCD display screen that communicates with donors on how their contributions will benefit the various charitable organisations. The project aims to tackle a global environmental issue and build a more caring society by helping the less fortunate at the same time.

- 9 Another project, 'Caring MINDS, Good Ol' Hearts', piloted by some students from ITE College West, explored using different artistic forms, such as dance and story-telling, to connect with the special needs students and the elderly. The learning experience from the project has since been applied to overseas trips in which ITE students have had the chance to work with poor or underprivileged kids.
- 10 I hope that these projects will inspire you to explore the many creative ideas that you will gain in addressing the needs of our society.

Building Institutional Partnerships

- 11 Besides the International Student Seminar, ITE has sought to foster international youth exchange by forging strong regional and international partnerships with like-minded institutions. These collaborations provide further avenues for ITE students to participate in overseas learning experiences and exchange programmes. I am pleased to note that later today, Hong Kong's Vocational Training Council and ITE will be renewing their Memorandum of Understanding for further bilateral collaboration. I congratulate both organisations for your endeavour in enhancing collaborations in vocational and technical education.

- 12 Another partnership which ITE has forged is the Global Education Network (or GEN), which connects internationally-renowned vocational and technical education institutions. Comprising Box Hill Institute, Australia; Kirkwood Community College, USA; Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, Canada; and ITE, the GEN seeks to enhance the employability of students through global educational and cultural exchange.
- 13 One of the key activities under GEN is a multi-country Exchange Programme where teams work together in projects of common interests. This year's programme on Project Management was hosted earlier this month by Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (or SAIT), Canada. The aim of the programme was to help students acquire knowledge on project management, develop a global mindset and enhance their life-skills through cross-cultural interactions. The international groups of students were tasked with 'real world' projects associated with the upcoming 40th WorldSkills Competition for youths, which will be hosted by Canada in Calgary in September this year.
- 14 At the end of the programme, SAIT was very impressed with the high level and professionalism of the students' work and presentations. In the words of the Vice President (Academic) of SAIT, Dr Gordon Nixon, "These students are leaving with solid knowledge and practical experience in project management, new friends, and an experience of a life time that they will never forget."

Conclusion

- 15 Likewise, we hope that this year's Seminar would be a meaningful and memorable experience for all participants. We look forward to each of you taking your place in society to build a better future, not just for yourselves, but for your community, country and for the world.

- 16 On this note, I congratulate ITE on organising this International Student Seminar and wish every delegate a fruitful and enriching experience.

Thank you.