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Opening remarks by Mr Ho Kwon Ping, SMU Chairman, at the launch of the SMU School of Law building, 15 March 2017

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**Opening Remarks by
Mr Ho Kwon Ping, SMU Chairman,
at the launch of the SMU School of Law building on Wednesday, 15
March 2017**

Guest of Honour, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong;

The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon;

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen;

A very good morning to all of you.

Today is a momentous occasion for us all.

First, the opening of the SMU School of Law Building also commemorates the 10th anniversary of the School's establishment in 2007.

Second, with this building SMU is returning to its roots – this site was where the original SMU was to have been built, and for which the old National Library was demolished some 15 years ago.

And third, being now adjacent to Fort Canning Park creates new impetus for SMU's 10,000-plus students to engage more meaningfully with this historic location, and to give it more life and vibrancy than hitherto.

Planning for this new building started in 2010 and the ground-breaking ceremony was held in January 2014. The building has taken shape rapidly in just three short years, and today we are delighted to celebrate its official opening.

The building was designed to have the power to inspire – with the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library at the heart of legal education and scholarship for Singapore.

Named in memory of the late Madam Kwa Geok Choo – wife of former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and mother of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong – this state-of-the-art library with its unprecedented global network of digital collections will serve not just the SMU community, but also the legal fraternity in Singapore and beyond, enabling a dynamic exchange between the School and the wider legal world.

Universities around the world are known for their iconic libraries and this one is strategically placed at the high point of the site next to Stamford Green. It is expressed architecturally as a sculptural dome to represent an ‘inspirational beacon’ that seeks to illuminate the lives and minds of those who draw upon the library’s centuries of legal knowledge. It is also symbolic of a ‘moral compass’ to remind students of the importance of ethical principles, truth and justice in society.

In this way we truly honour Madam Kwa Geok Choo. Beloved by all who knew her graceful humility, genuine warmth and gentle wit, Madam Kwa was herself a brilliant student and accomplished lawyer, who notably achieved higher grades than her classmate Mr Lee Kuan Yew in school. She also was key to the drafting of significant legislation which profoundly shaped Singapore in its formative years.

She was a woman decades ahead of her time and appropriately, this library will be a resource depository staying continually ahead of the changing patterns of knowledge acquisition and transmission through the broad and deep use of the latest digital technologies.

In addition to the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library, this building also houses a moot court facility named after Mr David Marshall, who was an esteemed teacher and probably the finest criminal defence lawyer Singapore has ever produced.

It features flexible furniture and movable walls, and incorporates state-of-the-art information technology and audio-visual infrastructure. We can use the facility to simulate a courtroom or arbitration chamber for moot training and competitions; but we are also able to use the space for other teaching and training formats as well.

Our law students have done Singapore proud in many international moot competitions, putting us on the world map despite the School of Law's young age. With the establishment of the David Marshall Moot Court, students now have better facilities to support their training. This will certainly put them in good stead to raise the bar even higher and perhaps one day our own SMU moot court competition can be one of the most prestigious events in the global moot court calendar.

To remind all SMU law students to always strive towards the qualities of passion, courage and integrity, a bust of David Marshall is enshrined in the moot court.

In opening the new law school building today we celebrate and commemorate two outstanding members of the legal fraternity, Madam Kwa Geok Choo and Mr David Marshall.

There are countless others in the distant and near past and the present, who can inspire future generations of Singapore lawyers, many of whom will pass through these halls of learning.

On this note, let me thank members of our Board of Trustees, the architects, consultants, staff, faculty and students who have collaborated so closely to make this building become reality.

Thank you also to our donors and stakeholders, and in particular to the Lee family and the Marshall family for their gracious support and presence here today.

Those of us here today and generations of students, faculty and visitors to come will be forever grateful to you all.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me now to invite our Guest of Honour, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, to give his address.