

Jane Horan  
Board Member, Singapore Council of Women's Organisations  
**Welcome Address for SCWO-NUS Debating Tournament 2012**

---

**Mr. Junting Chan, Convener of the Tournament**, Australian High Commission Singapore, NUS Debate Club, and the Adjudication Core, esteemed guests, organizers, participants, supporters and friends, thank you all for being here today.

It gives me great pleasure to deliver the opening address at the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual SCWO Debating Tournament, this year with NUS.

**Why are we here?** To engage in a lively discussion and challenge opposing viewpoints about topical, global issues facing women. And, after all, a conversation where everyone agrees is... well, boring - right?

Let me highlight the reasons why we're here - the idea of the debates came together last year to Celebrate International Women's Day. This year – continues to be another big year for women just look at **Newsweek headline - 150 Fearless Women in the World** – or The Rise of China's Billionaire Tiger Women. 5 Years ago, you might not have seen this headline.

Honestly you would have to be hiding under a rock not to have read the research, the statistics and the news about women.

From the streets in Cairo to the office buildings in New York, Singapore, Sydney, Malaysia and Hong Kong - **women are making their voices heard.**

And, they have been heard – we seen many changes – Christine Lagarde take the helm of the International Monetary Fund, Ang Sang Su Kyi campaign for seat in Burmese parliament, and Lemah Gbowee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for non-violent struggle for women's rights in Liberia, Africa.

Much has changed and more will continue to change, particularly if we have a determined group of young adults debating these topics and grappling with these issues.

At the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations – we thought what a better way to celebrate International Women's Day with debates on topical women's issues.

We are delighted to have a phenomenal group of young debaters – we couldn't ask for a better group to debate these issues. Your ideals, energy and enthusiasm make all of you effective agents of **positive change**.

At SCWO we believe this inter-varsity tournament raises awareness of women's issues among the youth locally, regionally and internationally. That's why we've partnered with the youth of Singapore and across the Asia Pacific Region to deliberate on matters impacting women today and into the future.

And, we expect you to continue debating these issues well into the future – a tall order, I know ....but we believe you can handle it.

Indeed, debates are a means of encouraging critical thinking and personal expression, which are essential to the sustained progress of any society.

Margaret Thatcher, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom once said,

**I LOVE ARGUMENT, I LOVE DEBATE. I DO NOT EXPECT ANYONE JUST TO SIT THERE AND AGREE WITH ME, THAT'S NOT THEIR JOB.**

And for those of you in the audience you're already thinking - why have a boring conversation, when you can have a debate?

This Tournament would not have been possible without the invaluable input from many groups of individuals. First and foremost, I would like to thank all the participants and adjudicators for your

enthusiasm and support for this one-of-a-kind tournament. We hope to witness several intellectually stimulating discussions on the debate motions over the next few days!

I would also like to thank the Australian High Commission for all their contributions to this Tournament. Most notably, they have very kindly sponsored a pair of air tickets to Australia, as the prize for the individual who will come out tops in the Best Speaker category. SCWO will also be giving out trophies and cash prizes to the winning and runner-up teams. I am certain that all the participants will put in their best efforts in the hopes of securing these coveted prizes!

Last year, this Tournament began with the spark of an idea. A great deal of hard work went into turning that idea into the reality we are experiencing today. This is why I'd like to give special mention to all the organizers of this Debating Tournament, especially the NUS Debating Society and all the relevant interest groups from the National University of Singapore, particularly Junting Chan for the countless meetings and enthusiasm he shared at each one. Thank you to all of you for all the time, effort and commitment that went into making this event possible.

Last, but most definitely not the least, I would like to express my gratitude to all the volunteers who will be assisting in the smooth running of this Debating Tournament. It is heartening to see how so many of you have voluntarily taken the time from your busy schedules to play a part in this exciting event.

And with that, ladies and gentlemen, I declare the SCWO-NUS Debating Tournament well and truly open! To all the participants, I wish you all the best. Thank you.