

SMC 20th Anniversary Dinner

Thursday, 24 August 2017

Congratulatory Remarks by the Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon,
Supreme Court of Singapore

1. I am delighted to be here with you today to mark this historic milestone of two decades of accomplishments in mediation. The Singapore Mediation Centre (SMC) was established in the 1990s to advance mediation in Singapore, and it has blazed the trail in establishing private mediation as an essential component of our dispute resolution offerings. I am very grateful to all those who have played a part in this remarkable achievement.

2. Our legal landscape has changed significantly and will continue to do so. Mediation in Singapore is no longer just a diversionary measure to help ease the judicial case load; nor is it just a fringe option for clients with particular needs. Nor is its use limited to low value or community disputes. Instead, mediation as a dispute resolution process has established itself as one of the core options, co-existing with court processes and arbitration, and it is often used as a first-step for resolving high-value civil and commercial disputes. I predict that in the years to come, it will continue to grow in importance.

3. The Courts have supported and will continue to support the development of domestic mediation because of the critical role it plays in the entire dispute resolution eco-system. The fact that one of our most respected Judges sits as chair of the SMC is one critical demonstration of that support. And we take this view because, as I had suggested earlier this year at *The Law Society Mediation Forum*, the core attributes of affordability, efficiency, accessibility, flexibility and effectiveness that are central to mediation are essential ingredients to maintaining the robustness of the values of our Rule of Law ideal today.

4. In keeping with this recognition, there has been growing acceptance that access to justice can be obtained outside the courtroom, through mediation. There is therefore good reason for saying that mediation is here to stay. SMC will continue to be the key stakeholder and driver of domestic commercial mediation in Singapore, and I reaffirm the Courts' support for this.

5. On this occasion, I would especially like to applaud SMC's mediators who have passionately served on its Principal and Associate Mediator Panels. Through your dedication, you have played a vital role in the justice system and in facilitating access to justice for disputants. As mediation continues to flourish in Singapore, I encourage more of you to pursue professional development and training opportunities that are available and to take up the challenge and the opportunity of developing yourselves as full-time mediation professionals.

6. I congratulate all of SMC Board members, staff, and mediators past and present for their perseverance in the attainment of Singapore's mediation

successes. I especially thank Justice Belinda Ang for tirelessly working to lead the SMC, and the wonderful team of professionals led by Seng Onn, who support her in this drive. Once again, thank you to all of you for your contributions to the SMC story.

7. I wish you a wonderful evening.