

## **Reflection on Asian Universities Alliance (AUA) Youth Forum (13 – 17 Nov)**

*Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok Thailand*

I had the privilege of being one of three students to represent NUS at the first-ever Asian Universities Alliance Youth Forum (AUAYF) from the 13th to 17th of November 2017 in Bangkok. It was a 5-day forum where we got to meet many like-minded peers from top universities and faculties around Asia. During our time there, we attended lectures and panel discussions hosted by Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok's leading university, and had the opportunity to speak with industry experts and specialists who were passionate about promulgating the need for sustainability. The theme of the forum centered on **"Empowering Youth towards Sustainability: People, Planet and Prosperity"** as well as the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as identified by the United Nations.



Living in affluent Singapore, we are unfamiliar with the idea of a bucolic life where poverty, inequality and sanitation are exigent issues. In all honesty, only 3 of the 17 SDGs listed are truly relatable to our society. Of course, the Singapore we see today is no fortuitous feat. Our forefathers certainly put in prodigious amounts of effort to achieve the success we enjoy today. However, this forum reaffirmed the disparity between Asian states and accentuated the fact that just because Singapore is enjoying its progress and wealth, does not mean we should be impervious to the happenings of our neighbouring countries or disregard the need to be sustainable.



*Delegates from NUS Real Estate (from left to right) Dr. Grace Wong, Tan Hui Yang, Yong Jie Ying, Amanda Tang; with Professor Andrew Wee, NUS Vice-President (UGR).*

The forum also included a competition where 6 teams are formed amongst university delegates, with 2 teams allocated to one of the three cornerstones of a sustainable society – People, Planet and Prosperity. Teams were given 2 days to design a solution addressing each aspect, while at the same time, clearly define the role of youths in



achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, teams have to expatiate on their solutions' feasibility, sustainability as well as propose a reasonable timeline for their solution to be carried out. The competition comprised an internal pitching to 3 honorary members of the sustainability field, followed by a final pitching to 50 members of the Asian Universities Alliance.



My team and I had the great honour of being crowned Champions of the competition for our proposal on a youth-centric business model involving a technological platform to bridge the gap between urban and rural youths.

This competition gave me the opportunity to work with some of the best and brightest minds of Asia, learn more about the societal issues in their countries and build a network of individuals committed to the same cause.

Besides the camaraderie forged among the delegates present at the forum, the greatest takeaway is recognising the importance of empowering youths as actors of change in the sustainability movement. Ultimately, if we wish to protract any of our efforts on sustainability today, we need to ensure that the future generations – the youths – are equally committed to this movement as well.

*The AUA is a new network that was established in April 2017, spearheaded by Tsinghua University, with co-founders Chulalongkorn University, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, King Saud University, National University of Singapore, Nazarbayev University, Peking University, Seoul National University, United Arab Emirates University, Universitas Indonesia, University of Colombo, University of Malaya, University of Tokyo, and University of Yangon, Myanmar.*