

Dr. Robin Ramcharan, Executive Director, Asia Centre, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to congratulate all the participants who are able to make it physically here today as well as all others from so many countries who are attending the conference online due to the current situation affecting us all globally.

As of 4 October, the numbers arising from the COVID-19 pandemic stood at 35,156,100 infections and 1,038,254 deaths. The economic and public health catastrophe notwithstanding, COVID-19 has created a communications challenge for countries trying to tackle issues of disinformation and misinformation. The race to find a cure for the coronavirus has resulted in vaccine nationalism. Meanwhile, technology companies are increasingly called upon to address the virality of fake news on their platforms but their efforts are seen as too little too late.

As the Dean of the Graduate School of Communication and Innovation Management (GSCM), National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA). I foresee these as challenges of our time. How are we going to adjust ourselves to the new communications infrastructure when the COVID-19 pandemic subsides? What would the new global order be like, when nations become inward looking? How is technology going to impact the way we work and do business.

To answer these questions and more, NIDA will partner with Asia Centre to co-host the 6th International Conference entitled COVID-19 in Asia: Communications, Nationalism and Technology, from 6 to 8 October 2021, at NIDA. The conference topic is highly relevant as by this time next year, we expect to still see the effects of COVID-19 on society but would have had a full year or more to more meaningfully access its impact.

This partnership between Asia Centre and GSCM is not new. Since September 2019, there have been a series of engagements by representatives of both organisations in several activities. This led to a signing of an MoU on 21 July 2020 between Asia Centre and the GSCM to extend cooperation including in next year's conference.

As a concrete next step, Asia Centre and NIDA's Graduate School of Communication and Innovation Management will meet soon after this conference to finalise the conference call and themes. I am also pleased to note that the Thai Media Fund has also come onboard as a partner for next year's conference. Hence, I hereby invite you and those from your networks to partner and join us at the international conference in 2021.

Thank you.