President of the Republic of Singapore and NUS Chancellor Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam
Minister of State for Education and Manpower, Ms Gan Siow Huang
NUS Pro-Chancellors
NUS Chairman and Trustees
NUS President
Distinguished Honorary Graduate Dr Sundaresh Menon
Distinguished Honorary Graduand Mr Peter Ho
Graduates
Ladies and Gentlemen

Service

Mr Peter Ho is one of the finest public servants of our nation, and a man of many hats. He is currently Chairman of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore (URA), Chairman of the National Gallery Singapore, Chairman of the Social Science Research Council, Senior Advisor to the Centre for Strategic Futures in the Prime Minister’s Office, and Senior Fellow in the Civil Service College, among others.

Over the course of his sterling career, Mr Ho has served with distinction in many different roles. When he retired from the Singapore Administrative Service in 2010 after a career in the Public Service spanning more than 34 years, he was Head of Civil Service, concurrent with his other appointments of Permanent Secretary (Foreign Affairs), Permanent Secretary (National Security and Intelligence Coordination), and Permanent Secretary (Special Duties) in the Prime Minister’s Office. Before that, he was Permanent Secretary of Defence. He was also the inaugural Chairman of the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore.

Mr Ho continues to contribute to the public sector in various capacities even after his retirement. Our education sector has benefitted greatly from his service and his leadership, particularly here at NUS. He was a member of the NUS Board of Trustees from 2011 to 2023, and continues to be a member of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy’s Governing Board, and the Board of Governors of the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies at the Nanyang Technological University.
A Renaissance Man, Mr Ho has many areas of expertise, from governance, urban development and scenario planning to strategic futures. After more than four decades of stellar service in the public sector, he has left an indelible mark on Singapore’s Public Service, policymaking and governance.

**Early Background**

For those of you who are curious about the beginnings of Mr Ho’s public service career, let me share a nugget of information. He joined the Singapore Armed Forces in 1973 on being awarded an SAF Overseas Scholarship. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree in Engineering Tripos from Cambridge University. He trained as an infantry officer in the SAF, and then was posted in 1976 to the Republic of Singapore Navy, where his experiences – including a stint as a Commanding Officer of the RSS Daring, a B-Class patrol craft – helped strengthen his commitment to tackling seemingly intractable problems. After holding various command and staff appointments in the SAF, Mr Ho transferred to the Singapore Administrative Service in 1982.

**Awards and Accolades**

Mr Ho has steered the Singapore Public Service with his visionary leadership. He built a future-ready Public Service, and significantly advanced Singapore’s interests in defence, foreign affairs, security, and governance. Recognising the complexity of wicked problems that the government was faced with, he galvanised agencies to work together to tackle cross-cutting national challenges. As URA Chairman, he has taken urban planning to new frontiers and gained international recognition for Singapore’s brand of urban development. Overall, Mr Ho had strengthened the whole-of-government approach and strategic planning capabilities within the public sector.

In recognition of his contributions to the public sector and the nation, several national honours have been conferred on Mr Ho. He was awarded the Public Administration Medal (Gold) in 1997 for his significant contributions in modernising Singapore’s defence capability. In 2007, he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for his leadership and contributions to the Singapore Public Service, and then, in 2016, Mr Ho topped the list of National Day awards by being conferred the prestigious Distinguished Service Order, one of Singapore’s top national honours, for his service to his country.

In the field of science and technology, Mr Ho was awarded the Supercomputing Asia High Performance Computing Distinguished Service Award by the National Supercomputing Centre Singapore for his leadership in establishing high-performance computing as a strategic national interest within the research infrastructure and setting in place policies and long-term strategies to exploit high-performance computing to enhance Singapore’s scientific research, technological innovations, and economic competitiveness. Mr Ho had also been awarded the Defence Technology Medal (Distinguished Leadership) by the Ministry of Defence in 2015, and an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science by NTU in 2018.

Mr Ho was conferred the NUS Outstanding Service Award in 2022 for his service and achievements towards NUS. He had made significant contributions to the University in many different capacities. As a member of the NUS Board of Trustees, Mr Ho has been a source of strategic wisdom in helping chart the University’s direction in education and research. He served on four of NUS’ seven standing board committees, chairing both the Campus Planning and Development Committee, and the Nominating Committee, as well as serving on the Executive Committee and the Remuneration Committee. As a member of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy’s Governing Board and its Executive Committee, as well as Chairman of its Finance Committee, Mr Ho has been providing invaluable guidance to the School, in areas regarding its strategic planning and the school’s overall development, as well as
finances and programmes. He was also the Founding Chairman of the Faculty of Engineering’s (now known as the College of Design and Engineering) Advisory Board from 2017 to 2021.

**Conclusion**

The award of an honorary doctorate is a recognition of the achievements of the individual. For Mr Ho, this award holds special significance to NUS, given his substantial service to the University. We are honoured that we have this opportunity to honour and recognise him today.

Mr Chancellor, for his devoting his life to public service, to education and scientific research, as well as to Singapore, may it please you to confer on Mr Peter Ho Hak Ean, the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters.