



MUIS
DISTINGUISHED
VISITORS
PROGRAMME



MEDIA KIT

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THE DISTINGUISHED VISITOR PROGRAMME 2011

The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis) will organise its third Distinguished Visitor Programme (DVP) from 28 September to 2 October 2011.

Objectives

The Distinguished Visitor Programme, introduced in 2006 as part of Muis' capacity building initiatives, seeks to provide an opportunity to **meet and engage** with eminent Muslim statesmen, leaders and thinkers of international standing and to **discuss latest developments** in contemporary issues on Islam and Muslims.

Background

The programme comprises courtesy calls on the President of Singapore, the Prime Minister and other key Cabinet Ministers; and engagement sessions with Muslim scholars, inter-faith leaders and other key Muslim stakeholders such as *asatizah* and Madrasah sectors.

A key highlight of the DVP is the Muis Lecture delivered by the Distinguished Visitor, and chaired by the Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs. Attendance at previous Muis Lectures has averaged 700 participants with a good mix of political and community leaders, the *asatizah* (Islamic religious teachers) fraternity, scholars and students of Islam and Muslims, *madrasah* teachers and students, interfaith leaders and activists.

The Distinguished Visitor Programme has been strongly supported by the SPH Foundation since its beginnings in 2006.

Previous Distinguished Visitors

The inaugural DVP was in 2006 where the late Grand Syeikh of Al-Azhar, Syeikh Dr Muhammad Syed Tantawi delivered a lecture on “Islam and its Place in The Modern World”.

In 2009, during the second DVP, the Grand Mufti of Syria, Syeikh Dr Ahmad Badruddin Hassoun delivered a public lecture on “Islam’s Enduring Values for Humanity”.

The Third Distinguished Visitor

This year, Muis is honoured to have as our Third Distinguished Visitor, **His Excellency Sheikh Dr Mustafa Ceric, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina**. A well-respected Muslim leader and scholar, HE Sheikh Dr Mustafa Ceric is known for spreading and strengthening diversity and promoting peaceful co-existence in Europe and the West.

During his 5-day visit, HE Sheikh Dr Mustafa Ceric will be involved in many dialogues and discourses with various segments of the community. In particular, the community will benefit from the Grand Mufti’s thoughts on a wide variety of topics in his engagements with political and community leaders, such as Islam and Social Cohesion, Islam & Democracy, and Islam and Global Muslims and how these will impact the global world order.

The many engagements will lead up to the **Muis Lecture – the climax of the Distinguished Visitor Programme 2011**.

i) Rich engagements with the Community

A series of engagements have been arranged to tap on the vast experience and knowledge of the Distinguished Visitor. These include interactions with:

- *Asatizah* (including members of the Fatwa Committee and Syariah Court)
- Madrasah teachers, students and staff
- Interfaith leaders
- Leaders of Malay and Indian Muslim organisations
- Migrant Muslim groups
- Youth leaders and PMETs

ii) The Muis Lecture 2011

As part of his visit, the Grand Mufti will be delivering the Muis Lecture on **"The Challenge of Diversity in Modern Society"**.

At the lecture, HE Sheikh Dr Mustafa Ceric will explore the idea of contestation within religion, driven by growth of diversity as it becomes a permanent feature for most societies. He will speak on the role of religion as a unifier that can bring humanity to greater heights.

The lecture will be chaired by Minister Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts and the Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs. It will be held on Saturday, 1 October 2011, 2.00pm to 4.30pm, at the Grand Ballroom, Grand Hyatt.

Please see Annex A for a biodata of the Grand Mufti.

MAJLIS UGAMA ISLAM SINGAPURA

ANNEX A

BIODATA OF HIS EXCELLENCY SHEIKH DR MUSTAFA CERIC



Sheikh Dr Mustafa Cerić was born in Visoko, Bosnia-Herzegovina (then Yugoslavia) in 1952. He received his early education in a traditional madrasah in Sarajevo and continued with his first degree from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. He lived in the United States for several years, while doing his further studies. He graduated with a PhD in Islamic Studies from the University of Chicago.

Sheikh Dr Mustafa Cerić was appointed as the Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1999 and is still currently the Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina, serving the second of his 7-year term until 2013.

He is one of the most widely respected scholars of Islam residing in Europe. He sits as a member of several important local and international organisations such as:

- Interreligious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Council of 100 Leaders of the World Economic Forum
- European Council for Fatwas and Research
- World Conference of Religion and Peace
- Advisory Council, Tony Blair Faith Foundation
- Executive Council of World Forum of Ulama
- UNESCO

Sheikh Dr Mustafa Cerić has been one of the leading advocates for inter-religious understanding and cooperation. He is a signatory of *A Common Word between Us and You*, an open letter by Islamic scholars addressing Christian leaders calling for peace and understanding.

He is also a prolific writer having written many books in Bosnian. Among his English works are *Roots of Synthetic Theology in Islam* (1995), and *Toward a Muslim Social Contract in Europe* (2008).

Awards

He has won many awards for his work in promoting interfaith understanding and cooperation, such as:

- the UNESCO Felix Houphouet-Boigny Peace Prize in 2003
- International Council of Christians and Jews Annual Sternberg Award for his “exceptional contribution to interfaith understanding.”
- the Theodor-Heuss-Stiftung award in 2007 for his contribution to spreading and strengthening democracy
- Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of Muslim Social Scientists, UK in recognition of his distinguished contributions to better understanding between Faiths
- Eugen Biser Foundation award in 2008 for his efforts in promoting understanding and peace between Islamic and Christian thought

While in Singapore, Dr Mustafa Ceric will be accompanied by his wife, and his Aide, Imam Senaid Kobilica. Imam Senaid himself is a renowned scholar of Islam and advocate of interfaith and religious freedom in Europe. He is currently the President of the Islamic Council of Norway and member of the European Council of Religious Leaders.

Muis Lecture “The Challenge of Diversity in Modern Society”

Synopsis

One of the most dominant features of today's society is its increasingly cosmopolitan and global outlook. With the merging world economies, rapid expansion of technologies and unprecedented migration of people across borders and continents, diversity has become a permanent feature for most societies. This diversity poses new challenges. One, we can no longer maintain a certain monopoly over all spheres of life, including the social, religious and political. Second, as different ideas and practices interact within a shared polity, there's bound to be dynamics of accommodation and adaptation or rejection and resistance. In the process, new thinking and social practices may emerge, which will eventually lead to the formation of new elites, institutions and movements. In short, as society becomes more diverse, rapid social change will occur. The challenge of diversity would also imply that there is contestation within religion itself as the very soul of religion - its moral teachings - can be manipulated by misguided groups and individuals seeking to divide the world and force it into the path of conflict and destruction. It is the task of all to address the challenges posed by a new global reality, reclaim the universal and moral message of religion, and promote the unifying role of religion that can bring humanity to greater heights.

About the Speaker



Sheikh Dr Mustafa Cerić, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina was born in Visoko, Bosnia-Herzegovina (then Yugoslavia) in 1952. He received his early education in a traditional madrasah in Sarajevo and continued with his first degree from Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. He is one of the most widely respected scholars of Islam residing in Europe. In 1981, he was appointed as Imam of the Islamic Cultural Center of Greater Chicago in Northbrook, Illinois, USA. He lived in the United States for several years, while doing his further studies. He graduated with a PhD in Islamic Studies from the University of Chicago. As a widely respected scholar, he sits as a member of several important local and international organisations such as the Council of 100 Leaders of the World Economic Forum, International Commission for Peace Research, Executive Council of World Forum of Ulama and World Council of Religions and Peace. For his efforts in furthering peace and interfaith cooperation, he was awarded the UNESCO Felix Houphouet-Boigny Peace Prize in 2003. He was also a recipient of the International Council of Christians and Jews Annual Sternberg Award for his “exceptional contribution to interfaith understanding.” He is author to numerous

works in Bosnian, including *Islam and the West* (2000) and *Islam in Bosnia* (1994).

Sheikh Dr Mustafa Ceric will be delivering the Muis Lecture as part of Muis' Distinguished Visitor Programme (DVP). The DVP aims to provide key government and public sector leaders as well as community and religious leaders an opportunity to meet and engage with eminent Muslims statesmen, leaders and thinkers of international standing on the latest developments in contemporary issues on Islam and Muslims.