



## SEMINAR MUSLIMAH MASJID 2011 (MOSQUE WOMEN NETWORK SEMINAR 2011)

### Introduction

1. For the first time in the history of mosques in Singapore, the Mosque Women Network (Mosque Muslimah) has organised the above seminar today. The theme of the seminar was “*Dynamic Muslimah, Pillar of Strength for Our Mosques*”. It was attended by some 500 Muslimah including key appointment holders of Mosque Management Boards, staff and volunteers from mosques in Singapore.

2. This seminar was organized as a lead up to Mosque Convention 2011 (MC11) scheduled on December 4<sup>th</sup>. This is where the entire mosque sector comes together to chart the way forward for mosques in Singapore the next five years. (Please see Annex A for details). Today’s deliberations will form an integral part of recommendations to be presented at MC11. *Seminar Muslimah Masjid 2011* also paid tribute to the many unsung heroines over the years who had given much to mosques, often quietly and unstintingly.

3. The seminar was timely because of the changing demography of women in Singapore including Muslim women. There has been an increase in the participation and contribution of Muslimah in mosque programmes and activities. It is estimated that there are about 3,000 active women volunteers in mosques. There are more women appointed to the Mosque Management Board (MMB) now compared to 10 years ago – from 63 women in the MMBs in the year 2000 to almost double at 111 in 2010. Women constitute 15 per cent of total MMB members. More women are also holding key appointments like Secretary and Treasurer in MMB and are also working in key staff positions like Mosque Managers and Education Managers. In addition younger Muslimah now make up the majority of the people attending mosque programmes and activities. Their expertise, experience, professions and educational profiles are also more diverse. It was therefore necessary to take stock of these developments and to discuss ways to harness their varied talents, strengths and potential and hear their aspirations for the mosque sector.

4. One key element of the seminar was the presentation of the theme paper which outlined key recommendations, vision, mission and role of Mosque Muslimah in the next five years. These recommendations were drawn from a series of consultations held earlier this year involving MMB members, staff and volunteers.

5. Among the key recommendations in the theme paper are for Mosque Muslimah

- a) to be a role model for other Muslimah and to be ambassadors of Islam;

- b) to play a more significant and strategic role in the leadership and management of our mosques; and
- c) to lead and champion a social cause that will help alleviate issues confronting challenged families within our community.

6. The above recommendations were deliberated in two concurrent breakout sessions. Participants generally agree with the **Role Model, Leadership, Championing cause (RLC)** framework. The summary of key issues discussed are captured in Annex B. Muis President, Haji Alami Musa welcome the recommendations which will be captured into the recommendations for MC11.

7. The climax of the seminar was an hour-long dialogue with the Guest of Honour, Minister for Information, Communications and The Arts and Minister in charge of Muslim Affairs, Dr Yaacob Ibrahim. The participants engaged Dr Yaacob on pertinent issues surrounding their hopes, aspiration and challenges for women in the mosque as well as their contribution and role in society including nation building. Dr Yaacob encouraged more Muslim women to come forward to serve at mosques and other national agencies.

8. For further information, please contact Mr Mohamad Helmy Mohd Isa, Assistant Director, Mosques at [helmy@muis.gov.sg](mailto:helmy@muis.gov.sg) or 90628792 or Mr Paiman Supangat, General Manager, North West Mosque Cluster at [paiman@muis.gov.sg](mailto:paiman@muis.gov.sg) or 96629095.

25 September 2011

# **ANNEX A**

## **PRORGAMME FOR SEMINAR MUSLIMAH 25 September 2011, Orchid Country Club**

- 7.45am      Arrival of Guests & Registration
- 8.25am      Opening by MC Hjh Norizan Mohamed
- 8.30am      Welcoming Remarks by Hjh Rodziah Atan
- 8.40am      Presentation of Theme paper by Hjh Norlizah Mohd Yusof
- 9.15am      Breakout sessions
- 10.30am     Morning Tea Break
- 11.00am     Plenary session: Conclusions of Breakout Discussion
- 11.30am     Arrival of Minister**
- 11.35am     Dialogue with Minister, chaired by Ustazah Nurul 'Izzah Khamsani.**
- 12.30pm     Minister takes leave**
- Response by President Muis
- 1.00pm      Presentation of token to ex MERAK Committee
- 1.15pm      Lunch and Zohor prayer
- 2.30pm      Special session with Mufti, Dr Mohd Fatris Bakaram
- 4.00pm      Afternoon Tea Break
- 4.30pm      End of Event

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### **Introduction**

Muis is organizing Mosque Convention 2011 at the end of this year to discuss key challenges facing the mosque institution and chart the direction of mosques in Singapore for the next five years.

2.      Lead by mosque leaders and facilitated by Muis, this convention involves some 600 Mosque Management Board (MMB) members, mosque key staff and volunteers who have, since March this year been actively involved in discussions to assess progress made by mosques since the last convention and identify areas for improvements to bring the mosques to a higher level for greater impact on the community.

3. The convention is scheduled on 4 Dec 2011. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong will be the Special Guest and will join mosque leaders for a lunch reception.

### Background

4. The last mosque convention was held in 2005<sup>1</sup>. Since then, mosques have made significant progress in many areas. Mosques today are observed to be active nodes in the national grid. They contribute to community and social development, are 'friendlier', better governed, more transparent and better resourced with more volunteers as well as staff. Nevertheless, admittedly there are gaps and rooms for improvements.

5. Hence, the upcoming convention aims to address the gaps, by coming up with a plan with strategies and recommendations and building on the collective strengths of the mosques resulting from the previous conventions.

### Process

6. The convention has adopted a consultative process involving the entire mosque sector. Since Mar 2011, numerous discussions were held at various platforms involving MMB members, mosque key staff, mosque religious officers and volunteers. In these discussions, mosque leaders took the lead. The consultation is still on-going. For Mosque Convention 2011, those outside the mosque sector were also involved in the consultation process - young professionals, Singapore migrant Muslims, representatives of Malay/Muslim organisations, youth groups, media and selected individuals. To provide avenue for the community to give inputs, we have created a special email address [ourmosques@mosque.sg](mailto:ourmosques@mosque.sg) or [masjidkita@mosque.sg](mailto:masjidkita@mosque.sg).

### Theme

7. Many ideas were generated and feedback received from those discussions. They were distilled, analysed and from there, the theme of the convention was crafted - "Enhancing Spirituality, Guiding Community and Changing Lives in an increasingly challenging world". It describes more aptly the basic roles and functions of the mosque. The convention will seek to delve deeper and focus on in its further deliberations and focus group discussions.

8. The theme will be supported by a list of strategies and recommendations which mosque leaders and Muis are presently developing and refining based on the inputs of the discussions. Details of this will be shared nearer the convention.

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<sup>1</sup> With the theme "Remodeling Mosques" and having four thrusts "Reshaping Content of Islamic Learning and Social Development", "Restructuring Leadership" and "Reorganizing Systems", it detailed out some 11 strategies and 30 recommendations..

## **ANNEX B**

(Summary of discussions at Breakout Sessions)

### **Celebrating the contributions of Women in the Mosque Sector**

1. Participants generally agree with the **Role Model, Leadership, Championing cause (RLC)** framework.

#### Role Model

- They strongly feel that as Muslimah Masjid, they should be exemplary in their akhlak, taqwa, ilmu etc.
- A training and development roadmap is required to fill the current gaps.

#### Leadership

- Leadership regeneration in Mosque Muslimah is a challenge expressed by the participants. There is a call to have better efforts to reach out to the young and attract them to Mosque Muslimah activities. There was a suggestion that the Mosque Muslimah work with the Mosque youth wings Eg. Coaching and mentoring from youth leadership to Muslimah group.
- While they agree with the recommendation to have more Muslimah in MMB, there is a concern that it should not be about quantity over quality. Need to also ensure that current pool of MMBs must have necessary knowledge, attitudes and competencies. Clear roles of Mosque Muslimah leaders.

#### Championing Social Causes

- Participants agree that Mosque Muslimah to lead and champion social causes to be selected later. At the same time, it should also consider areas beyond social issues that concern the wider community, based on the competencies of the available talent pool. Eg. Financial planning, health, etc.
2. In order to realize the above, there is a need for mindset change amongst mosque leaders, including Mosque Muslimah.
  3. Participants reminded themselves that as we contribute to the mosque and the community we must not forget our primary responsibilities to the family and home.

4. Suggestion that information gathering (database of resources: people, expertise etc.) is continued after this seminar in order to facilitate the implementation of the Mosque Muslimah plans. Regular updates on community issues and that within the mosque locality can also help to strengthen the plans.
5. Muis acknowledges all these recommendations and inputs and will study them carefully and will be incorporated into the MC11 deliberations.

