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Eastern Perspectives on Faith and Globalisation

In a major speech at the National University of Singapore today, Mr Blair welcomed the university's decision to initiate an academic course on faith and globalisation.



The National University of Singapore

The Faith and Globalisation initiative is one of the Faith Foundation's main projects. It seeks to highlight the pivotal role that faith has to play in our globalised world, where different spheres are increasingly interconnected. It is the Foundation's belief that intelligent and sustained reflection on the crucial issues of faith and globalization can lead to the deeper understanding and the kind of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence, that will be vital in the 21st century.

Mr Blair stressed how a strong sense of values could help shape globalisation, so that globalisation did not push humankind down a path they did not wish to travel, but would ensure globalisation helped humankind in the ways they wished to go.

Explaining why he set up the foundation Mr Blair pointed to the fact that in an increasingly globalised world, it is important to develop a deeper global understanding. Ignorance breeds fear, but knowledge and understanding help people to learn to live together peaceably. Within that broad context, he suggested a better understanding of the role that faith might play is a crucial ingredient. Faith could be either negative and destructive or a powerful and positive force for good. The main faiths had at their core a message to love your neighbour.

The Faith Foundation pioneered a similar course in collaboration with Yale University last year. Today Mr Blair welcomed the fact that the NUS were now devising their own version of the course, with a particular focus on South East Asia. An eastern perspective to the debate will give the course a unique angle. Considering that power in the world is shifting east, these contributions will be invaluable. "No consideration of globalisation can be complete without views from the East" said William Chapman Director of Policy at the Faith Foundation.

Furthermore Singapore specifically has much to bring to the table. It is a microcosm of globalisation- containing rich ethnic and religious diversity. "Singapore is, and will continue to be an agile and influential player in a world which is becoming inevitably more complex. A player which will be able to translate the increasingly subtle and complicated grammar and language of this new world in which ancient barriers are coming down and old and rigid definitions of identity becoming ever more fluid" said Chapman.

Mr Blair warmly praised the NUS for its work and reputation. He welcomed the way in which the university's proposed course was focusing on some key issues and some very practical ones in terms of the relationships between faiths and the modern world, including faith and violence, faith and gender and faith and technology.

The Foundation is honoured that Yale and The National University of Singapore are now both taking part in the Faith and Globalisation course and we look forward to this course being taken up by similarly high calibre institutions across the world in the future.