

**12TH INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE
CHINESE OVERSEAS (ISSCO)**

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2025

On

**“CHINESE OVERSEAS IN A CHANGING WORLD:
GLOBAL NETWORKS, LOCAL REALITIES”**

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences UM

4th November 2025

Honoured Sponsors and Partners,

Distinguished Guests,

Selamat datang (Welcome!), and a very good morning to all distinguished guests, colleagues, and friends.

1. We gather at a time when the world is in flux — economically, politically, and morally. The patterns of migration, belonging, and identity that once seemed stable have become fluid. What we study today is not just the history of movement, but the reshaping of humanity itself — how individuals and communities

navigate borders, forge belonging, and contribute to societies in constant transformation.

2. The story of the Chinese overseas is, at its core, a study of adaptability and resilience — a mirror of how civilisation survives through reinvention. In this lies a deeper question: how do we, as scholars and as societies, adapt to a world where change is the only constant?
3. In today's era of global disruption, the challenge is not the lack of knowledge — it is the lack of wisdom in applying it. Migration, identity, and integration are no longer confined to one ethnicity or region; they have become universal struggles of belonging and survival.
4. We face a rising tide of xenophobia, digital tribalism, and cultural fragmentation, as communities retreat into comfort zones of similarities.
5. If scholarship does not confront these realities head-on — if it merely observes rather than engages — it risks irrelevance. The study of diasporas must therefore move from documentation to direction: to offer insights that heal divides, inform policy, and inspire new forms of coexistence.
6. The global stage is being reshaped by power competition, economic recalibration, and technological acceleration. The movement of people — whether driven by opportunity, displacement, or choice — reflects the underlying forces of inequality, geopolitics, and survival.
7. In this context, the experience of the Chinese overseas offers a living laboratory: how networks evolve across continents, how

economic dynamism coexists with cultural negotiation, and how individuals maintain identity amid global flux. It is not just a Chinese story. It is a human story — about the balance between heritage and modernity, global integration and local rootedness.

8. For Malaysia, this carries particular meaning. We stand at the intersection of civilisations — Indian, Malay, Chinese, Arab, and Western — and that intersection is our greatest strength.
9. We must reclaim this advantage by positioning Malaysia, and Universiti Malaya, as a global nexus for intercultural dialogue, migration studies, and human mobility research that transcends old boundaries.
10. The real measure of scholarship lies not in the volume of its publications, but in its capacity to influence minds, shape policies, and build understanding. This demands courage: to challenge established narratives, to think across disciplines, and to approach identity and belonging not as fixed categories, but as evolving human experiences.
11. In this age of misinformation and polarisation, we must restore academic integrity and intellectual courage as our moral compass. Knowledge must once again serve humanity — not ideology, not politics, not pride — but the search for truth and the betterment of humankind.

12. We must act on three fronts, to Rehumanise knowledge, Reinvest in education and understanding and Rebuild global solidarity.
13. Global resources are still directed more toward conflict than learning. We must make the moral argument that education is the highest form of defence — against ignorance, division, and fear. The crises of our time — climate change, inequality, and displacement — are borderless. Only a networked, values-based academic community can create lasting solutions.
14. In that spirit, we must continue to learn, connect, and act. The future will not be kind to those who remain comfortable. It will reward those who dare to think ahead, who build knowledge that unites, and who uphold values that endure.
15. At Universiti Malaya, we believe this is the true purpose of scholarship — to lead with conscience, to act with foresight, and to contribute with humanity.

I hereby with great honour, officiate the

International Conference 2025 on “Chinese Overseas In A Changing World: Global Networks, Local Realities”

Thank you.