We live in an era of globalization. The global flow of trade has more than doubled since the 1990s, and the growing productive global labor force has boosted the demand for energy and increased consumptions in developing and the developed countries alike. In the meantime, the intensity and scale of flows of capital, talents, skills, technologies, information, and ideas have been on the rapid rise over the past two decades. Despite the vision of globalization to raise all boats in poor and rich countries alike, many countries remain on the fringes and some are even falling further behind. Their exclusions are due to many reasons, including, among other things, competing interests, poor governance, discrimination, diseases, absence of infrastructure, declining competitiveness, and environmental challenges. Moreover, the chasm is not only presented between different economies. Britain leaving the European Union, Donald Trump winning the US presidency and the rise of the far-right in many developed countries demonstrated a disconnection between the preoccupations of ordinary people and global political elites, causing damaging consequences for democracy, the rule of law, social cohesion, and human development.

It is in this context that the Nanyang Centre for Public Administration (NCPA) organized the biennial Lien International Conference on Good Governance 2017 on 27 and 28 October at the Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore, with the theme “Forging Ahead towards an Inclusive and Sustainable Globalization”. Generously sponsored by the Lien Foundation and co-organized with the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) and the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS), this conference focused on how to achieve an inclusive globalization that can combine economic dynamism with social justice in a sustainable way for the people of the developed and the developing countries alike. The two-day event attracted more than 270 delegates and participants from around the world, and provided the opportunities for governments, businesses and civil societies to discuss in-depth how to work together towards an inclusive and sustainable globalization.
The opening ceremony of the conference was graced by distinguished guest speakers including Professor Er Meng Hwa, NTU’s Vice-President (International Affairs), Mr Laurance Lien, Chairman of Lien Foundation and Founder of Asia Philanthropy Circle, and Mr Tan Kok Yam, Deputy Secretary of Smart Nation and Digital Government, and Strategy Group in the Prime Minister’s Office, Singapore. Keynote speeches featured Honorable Ms Janice Lachance, President of ASPA, Professor Geert Bouckaert, President of IIAS, Dr Han Fangming, Vice Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Committee, Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, and Professor Heungsuk Choi, President of Korean Association for Public Administration. The plenary discussions brought together scholars, practitioners and lien fellows to discuss not only specific topics such as the “Belt and Road” Initiative, China’s economic reform, and the Sino-Singapore knowledge city, but also broader issues on technological change, innovation and their impacts on sustainable development and good governance.

The parallel sessions on 28th October explored five interrelated themes, including good governance and public sector reform, anti-corruption strategies, sustainable and inclusive economic development, social welfare and integration and the “Belt and Road” Initiative. The panel discussions joined the academia, industry and the government by having prominent scholars, officials and industry leaders as presenters and panel chairs, including Mr Chua Cher Yak, retired director of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau, Singapore, Ms Stacey Choe, the Director of Asia Philanthropy Circle, Singapore, and Professor Eric Heikkila, the Director of International Initiatives, Sol Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California, USA. The conference offered a valuable platform for local and international academics and practitioners to examine major challenges in governance in this changing era, especially from a cross-country comparative perspective.