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Media Release

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World leadership ‘perilously inadequate’ at handling unexpected crises, says global leadership report

A proliferation of ‘unthinkable’ events since late 2013 has shown world leaders’ ability to identify and handle unexpected major events to be perilously inadequate at critical moments, according to a new interim report on global leadership released today in conjunction with the ADC Forum.

“The rise of ISIS; the Russian seizure of Crimea; collapsing oil prices; a devastating Ebola outbreak; the dramatic uncoupling of the Swiss Franc from the Euro; and a flood of refugees into Europe from the Middle East and Africa. Failure to predict and prepare for ‘unthinkable’ events like these over the last two years has left countries and institutions scrambling to respond,” ADC Forum Chief Executive Anton Roux said.

The interim report, *Thinking the Unthinkable: A New Imperative for Leadership in the Digital Age*, was written by former BBC television broadcaster Nik Gowing and former Oxford Research Group managing director Chris Langdon for the Churchill 2015 21st Century Statesmanship Global Leaders Programme.

Research included sixty confidential, in-depth interviews with world leaders from the public and private sectors, as well as numerous other off-the-record discussions, including those held at the ADC Forum’s 2015 Australian Leadership Retreat — an annual meeting held for top level Australian and international leaders by the ADC Forum on Hayman Island.

By compiling and analysing evidence of leadership failures, the report identifies nine key trends contributing to predictive failures — including leaderships being overwhelmed by multiple pressures, institutional conformity, risk-aversion, cognitive dissonance, and wilful blindness.

“With the rate of disruptive change increasing through technological advancement, shifting geopolitical forces, and overwhelmed institutions, ‘unthinkable’ and often unpalatable events are likely to keep happening faster than the world’s leaders and institutions can respond to them,” Mr Roux said.

“If leaderships do not evolve to meet the challenges of this new strategic environment, to find a way to better predict and prepare, we risk seeing global resources increasingly strained as leaders lurch from crisis to crisis, instead of moving to pre-empt and prevent.”

The interim report will be available from 6 pm at:
<http://adcforum.org/thinking-the-unthinkable/>

ADC Forum (Founded as the Australian Davos Connection) is a not-for-profit leadership organisation founded in 1996 by the Australian members and participants of the World Economic Forum.

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Note: About the ADC Forum

ADC Forum is an independent, cross-sectoral Australian think-tank, bringing to bear strategic expertise in an open, dynamic development architecture to expand and improve our world through insights and practical solutions, opening opportunities and renewing fields of human endeavour.

By developing capacity for business, government, universities and civil society to jointly contribute to building a resilient global system, ADC Forum will be integral to shaping our shared future in the Asian Century.

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