



OPENING REMARKS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF ACTION COMMITTEE AGAINST NARCOTICS

Distinguished speakers and delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I am privileged to have the opportunity to meet you all here in Hong Kong. This conference which draws us together is the first ever large-scale international conference on drugs held in Hong Kong.

We are much honoured to have with us today, officials, professionals, academics and frontline personnel from various jurisdictions and regions to exchange and share the knowledge, experience and the latest information relating to all aspects of the drugs problem and the effective ways to tackle the issue. Our distinguished speakers will address the conference on issues from the country level as well as from the regional perspective. I am confident that we all will benefit professionally from them, and I thank our speakers for taking the time out of their busy schedules to join us.

Like many places in the world, Hong Kong is facing a rapidly changing drug scene. While the Secretary for Security has spoken in the area for international cooperation and Hong Kong's five-pronged approach in tackling drug abuse, I would like to dwell for a moment on the role that the non-government sector has played in combating drugs in our society.

In Hong Kong, in particular in drug education, treatment and rehabilitation as well as research, there been a rather long history of Government-private sector partnership. The close partnership between the government and the non-government sector is symbolized by the Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN). Established in 1965, ACAN has been a channel for comments and views from the frontline anti-drug workers, academics and professionals. This open attitude adopted by the government in dealing with drug abuse problems has allowed different views and philosophies be heard and taken into account in formulating policies and measures. The mutual trust has also enabled efficient flow of information from street corner to the meeting room of the ACAN and the desktops of our officials, and facilitated the formulation and implementation of effective strategies. In my capacity as the Committee's Chairman, I am glad to note that the government has consistently shown respect and is responsive to these voices. However, I need to emphasize that ACAN is not an advisory committee. As the name "Action Committee Against Narcotics" clearly conveys, the catchword here is "action". Today's conference, which is co-hosted by the Government and the ACAN, is the concrete result of such joint efforts.

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In the five concurrent workshops starting this afternoon, we will learn more on subjects of law enforcement, the challenges of changing drug abuse patterns, treatment and rehabilitation and preventive education. There are over 40 presentations to be delivered at the workshops. These contributors come from different parts of the world and the support given to us by this wide spectrum of experts is most encouraging. I am sure you will find the Conference a stimulating and rewarding one.

As we have just started the Year of the Rooster according to Chinese lunar calendar, I recall a Chinese proverb which says "A year's plan should be conceived in the spring." Now is the time for us to review our past efforts, to map out new strategies and to put our resolve and knowledge into ACTION.

Thank you.

Dr Philomen Choi Yuen-wan, SBS, JP