

FOREWORD

“Drugs destroy lives and communities, undermine sustainable human development and generate crime. Drugs affect all sectors of society in all countries; in particular, drug abuse affects the freedom and development of young people, the world’s most valuable asset.”

Opening statement of the Political Declaration
adopted by the United Nations General Assembly
Special Session on drugs in 1998

This solemn statement of warning, adopted by the world leaders in the United Nations 10 years ago, rings even louder today.

As I am reading the final draft of the Task Force Report, amidst the figures, deliberations and proposed measures, I pause and cast my mind back to the many faces I have encountered in the past year in connection with this work.

It was the 19-year-old speaking with stutters and slurs who introduced me in the most vivid manner to the severe harm of ketamine. The 13-year-old hip-hop dancer who started taking the same drug when he was eleven, sent chills down my spine as to how some of our children are being victimised by drugs. The 16-year-old girl with heavy make-up who told me about her abusive father and quarrels at home, and the 15-year-old student who insisted he would still join his friends at the drugs party although he knew full well the harm of drugs, all remind me what a tough battle it is that we are fighting.

Equally unforgettable are the brave parents who joined us at the launching ceremony of the publicity campaign. We saw tears of pain of one parent as he recounted how heartbreaking it was to see his boy being destroyed by drugs and the inability to help him pull through. We also saw tears of joy as another parent shared how she refused to give up on her daughter who eventually turned a new leaf.

Abuse of psychotropic substances has replaced heroin as our number-one enemy in the youth drug scene of Hong Kong. It represents 99% of drug abuse cases under the age of 21. It is a world-wide problem.

As the Task Force surveyed the efforts made by overseas countries to combat drug abuse, we feel more compelled to come up with focused, holistic and sustainable strategies to prevent Hong Kong from deteriorating to the deplorable state we have seen elsewhere.

Apart from building on the on-going efforts which have served us well over the years, the Task Force has invigorated the entire anti-drug publicity and proposed new endeavours including drug tests and enhanced probationary measures. Some of these proposals are controversial and there is a need for consultation and consensus before proceeding.

However, to tackle the problem of youth drug abuse at root, what we need is a caring culture. Apart from supporting parents and schools to strengthen the basic protective net, we need greater community involvement to provide our young people with opportunities and positive influence. We have been deeply impressed by the goodwill present in our society and motivated to provide a platform for the supplies and needs to meet. We are deeply indebted to all the corporations, professionals, NGOs and individuals who joined the troop of *Path Builders* to help our young people.

Last but not least I would like to thank my colleagues of different bureaux and departments for their contribution to the work of the Task Force. Your participation demonstrates not only the admirable professionalism and diligence, but also the common burden and desire shared by many parents to do something for our young people. I must in particular pay tribute to colleagues in the Narcotics Division for the toil and sacrifices you have made in the past year on this exceptional work to speak new life to our young people in need.

The conclusion of the work of the Task Force only inaugurates an intensified war on drugs. As the Proverbs say, “he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed”. May this spirit prevail as we get prepared to take the various recommendations forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Wong Yan Lung". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wong Yan Lung
Secretary for Justice