

The Society for the Rehabilitation of Offenders, Hong Kong 43rd Annual General Meeting

- English Translation of the Speech by the Honourable Chief Justice Andrew Li, Patron

President, Chairman and guests,

It gives me a great pleasure to attend the AGM meeting of the SROHK today, the first one in the 21st century.

Last year, under the leadership of the Chairman, Mr. Justice Leong, the Society continued to expand its services. Chairman Leong, will report to us in detail about the work of the Society. In this regard, you may also refer to the newly published Year Book of the SROHK.

In retrospect, the Society's services have, on the whole, been expanding step by step since its inception in the middle of the last century. In recent years, the Society has been targeting its services on the needs of service users with regard to drug abuse, vocational training, job placement and accommodation etc., and has made marked improvements in its services by offering many creative and effective programmes.

In view of the changing social, political and economic situations, the problems and needs of service users change constantly too. It is encouraging to see that the Society is not complacent with its achievements, but is keeping on revising its strategies to strive for progress and improvement.

Under the constitution of the SROHK, access to the Society's services is limited to Hong Kong residents who have been convicted and have served sentences in Hong Kong. As a matter of fact, there have been requests for service from Hong Kong residents who have served sentences overseas including those who served their sentences in the Macau Special Administrative Region. As prescribed by the Society's constitution, the SROHK can only extend its services to these people on a discretionary basis, with a view to helping them reintegrate into the community to become law-abiding citizens. In this regard, I am aware that the SROHK is considering extending its services to Hong Kong residents who have been convicted and have served sentences in the mainland and overseas. I think this is something that deserves our full support.

On the other hand, I know that the Society is considering extending its services into the area of crime prevention, especially the prevention of juvenile crimes. Although there are many groups and organizations directly or indirectly participating in crime prevention, I believe that the Society with its experiences of more than forty years in helping ex-offenders is in a better position and may play a more active role in the promotion of crime prevention.

I have also learned that the Society is actively considering how to respond to the introduction of 'Lump Sum Grant' by the Social Welfare Department in order to increase the flexibility of resource management and improve the effectiveness of the services. I understand that the Society is considering the adoption of Paradigm Shift as a measure to reinforce the rehabilitation of ex-prisoners through more effective use of resources. The Society has also opened up new areas in crime prevention so that services are cost effective and can cater for the needs of the society. The unceasing efforts to strive for improvement of the Society are much appreciated.

The Society's works on the rehabilitation of ex-prisoners are well recognised and supported by the Government and people from all walks of life. The achievements are there for all to see. I firmly believe that the Executive Committee and all the staff of the Society will continue to do their best to provide better services in order to meet new challenges of the 21st century. Thank you.

7 December 2000