

Opening Speech of Hon. Rimsky Yuen, SC, JP
Secretary for Justice of the HKSAR
at the YMCA International Youth Symposium 2013/2014
on 29 December 2013 (Sunday)

Dr. Yuk, Ms. Ong, Ms. Chow, the Rt. Hon. Lord Wei, the Hon. Penny Low, Professor Kim, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen [which of course include Young Ladies and Young Gentlemen]:

1. Let me begin by expressing my gratitude to the YMCA of Hong Kong for inviting me to take part in this Opening Ceremony. I feel both honoured and privileged to have this chance to participate in this meaningful event, and to meet so many local and overseas young ladies and young men.
2. I would like to make use of this opportunity to reaffirm the importance the Hong Kong Government attaches to the young generation, and also to share with you some of my thoughts on matters relevant to the theme of this symposium.

HKSAR Government's Youth Policy

3. For good reasons, international organizations and governments across the world have been attaching greater and greater importance to the young generation. Some place emphasis in enabling the young generation to be future leaders, some aim at enabling the young generation to have greater participation in public affairs, whilst others seek to achieve both or some other wholesome objectives.
4. At the international level, the United Nations General Assembly designated 1985 as International Youth Year for the first time, with special focus on participation, development and peace. Another International Year of the Youth came in 2010, and under the theme of dialogue and mutual understanding. Although the theme was expressed in different words, the call for attention to youth development remains essentially the same.

5. In Hong Kong, the Government has likewise attached great importance to the young generation. As early as in 1990, the Commission on Youth was established to provide advice to the Government on matters concerning the young generation. The objective of this Commission is to consolidate community efforts, to assist in formulating and implementing youth development programmes and activities, and also to nurture young people as future leaders with vision, creativity, leadership and commitment. Over the years, the Commission has made significant contribution, whether in terms of providing advices to the Government, conducting researches and studies, organizing youth programmes as well as facilitating international exchanges with overseas youth organizations.
6. Another example which demonstrates the importance attached by the Hong Kong Government to the young generation is the Youth Summit held last November, right here at this Youth Square, which provided a useful platform for the young generation to exchange views with government officials and guests on various youth topics.
7. It is certainly true that the young generation in Hong Kong, like those in other places, is facing great challenges. It is equally true that there are no simple solutions to these challenges. However, the Hong Kong Government will continue to attach great importance to our young generation. The reason, in my view, is obvious. We owe it to the current as well as future young generations to create a place where they would take pride in calling it their home.

The Theme: Transformation

8. Coming back to the theme of this symposium, namely, *Transformation – “Youth’s Convergence and Determination to Transform the World”*. Considering the recent past and looking into the near future, this theme is well chosen and a very apposite one.
9. Transformation, changes or evolution (however you may prefer to call it), is an ongoing process in the history of mankind. It is no exaggeration to say that the modern world in which we are living is a fast-changing world and also a world of significant transformation.

There are many different factors which caused the transformation we are facing. For the purpose of today and from a very general and macro perspective, I would like to highlight three inter-related key factors: first, the advance of technology; second, the impact of globalization and regional integration; and third, the shift in economic power.

10. I highlight these factors because I believe they will continue to bring about transformation that you, as the current young generation, have to face. It is for you, individually and collectively as well as working together with government and non-government bodies, to consider what you should or should not do. I do not pretend to be in a position to give you all the answers to the issues and questions that you may face as a result of the transformation that is taking place. However, in the course of this symposium, you would have the chance to listen to the views of eminent speakers and leaders in different fields; you would also have the opportunity to exchange views with other participants. I am sure you would feel much more enriched upon the conclusion of this symposium.

The Three Key Factors

11. Transformation brought about by the advance of technology is perhaps one of the most obvious and most strongly felt factor. As your generation was brought up in an age of technology, some of you may be a little puzzled as to why I say this. To illustrate my point, let me give you a brief account of the changes that I have experienced.
12. I graduated from law school and started practice as a lawyer in the summer of 1987. At that time, documents were generally prepared by electric (or even manual) type-writer, and the use of computer for word processing was hardly the norm.
13. The other most significant difference between that era and now is the means of communication. The office where I worked still had a telex machine, something which I believe you may not have seen one. Was there a fax machine? Yes, there was, but for various reasons, fax machine did not become popular until a little later. I do not need to

tell you that nowadays, even fax machine is no longer fashionable. Instead, we are now all used to various forms of instantaneous communication such as emails, WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook and others.

14. There is no question that the advance of technology will continue to bring about significant changes to our daily life as well as how human affairs are being conducted. Rather, the question is how we can make the best out of technological advances and at the same time avoid the collateral adverse impacts. For instance, whilst technology has made communication quicker and easier, there are observations that modern communication technology has resulted in less direct human contact or even a deterioration of inter-personal skills.
15. Like the advance of technology, the processes of globalization and regional integration also have far reaching consequences. On the one hand, they have brought about new opportunities for businesses and also created room for young talents to excel in areas of their choice. On the other hand, globalization and regional integration have created challenges to both organizations and individuals, including the young generation. To face such challenges, one has to have an international vision, as well as an outward attitude instead of an inward mentality. The question is how to build such international vision and outward attitude. A related question is competition. From the individual's point of view, the question is how one can stay competitive in a globalized world, when young talents are much sought after by countries all over the world. From the government's point of view, the question is how to maintain or enhance the competitiveness of its young generation, so as to maintain or enhance the competitiveness of the relevant city. Of no less importance is the question of how to address imbalance or even adverse consequences (whether financial or otherwise) caused by globalization or regional integration to some countries or some sectors of certain societies.
16. The third factor that I mentioned earlier is the shift in economic power. As observed by economists and confirmed by the relevant statistics, the gravity of the world's economy has shifted from the West to the East. Asia's share of the world's GDP has increased from

23.39% in 1990 to 34.32% in 2012. According to WTO statistics, China, in particular, has become the second largest trading economy in 2012. The implications of this change are certainly not confined to the economic or financial sphere. Instead, it has and will continue to have impacts on the dynamics of international and regional affairs. In short, when one considers the ongoing transformation of the world, this shift of economic power is a factor that one can ill afford to ignore.

Change or No Change

17. I have said transformation or change is an ongoing process. At the risk of telling the obvious, I should add that one should embrace changes, but that transformation should only be made if it is in the best interest of mankind. Transformation should not be made simply for the sake of transformation, nor should one allow transformation at the expense of social justice.
18. I would also like to stress one other point. While participating in the process of transforming the world, there are certain universal core values that need to be constantly kept in mind and steadfastly upheld. Amongst others, I would name two. The first one is the respect for the rule of law and fundamental human rights. In this globalized world, the upholding of the rule of law in the international context and the harmonization of the international legal order become even more important than before. The other one I would stress is the respect for cultural and other material differences of each city, country or region. The smaller the world is, the more important it is to have mutual respect and understanding. No transformation, no matter how beneficial in technological or economic terms, should be allowed to erode these core values.

Concluding Remarks

19. Let me conclude by quoting from the message consigned by the then Pope Paul VI to the youth of the world at the end of the Second Vatican Council in 1965, which reads as follows:

“Lastly, it is to you, young men and women of the world, that the Council wishes to address its final message. For it is you who are to receive the torch from the hands of your elders and to live in the world at the period of the most gigantic transformations ever realized in its history. It is you who receiving the best of the example of the teaching of your parents and your teachers, are to form the society of tomorrow. You will either save yourselves or you will perish with it.”

20. The message concluded with the suggestion, *“Build with enthusiasm a better world than what we have today”*. Though delivered back in 1965, this message is as valid as ever. Young ladies and gentlemen, the world is still undergoing a period of “gigantic transformation”, and the invitation to you to build a better future for mankind remains timely.
21. On this note, may I wish this symposium every success. As 2014 is approaching, may I also take this opportunity to wish all of you a very Happy New Year.

Thank you.