

14th Singapore Children's Society Lecture
A Shared Journey Safeguarding our Children
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Mr Koh, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm deeply honoured to be chosen as your speaker for the 14th Singapore Children's Society Lecture.

Singapore Children's Society has been a good friend for the past thirty years. I have been invited to several programmes of yours, and have kept some of your souvenirs, one of which you had given me in 1991, which is considered an invaluable antique, and the other one in 2000, a beautiful painting of children in play by an eight-year-old girl in Singapore.

Thank you for treating me as family for among the 14 speakers of your past annual lectures, I seem to be the only speaker from outside Singapore. What a big honour. Deeply appreciated!

The title jointly chosen: A Shared Journey Safeguarding Our Children is of paramount importance at this critical moment for us all.

The world is shivering. It is breaking down. The pandemic has been truly a catastrophic global crisis, first of its kind in our lifetime that is shaking the world up, breaking the world down and gravely affecting everyone, our children in particular. Children suffer, many silently, and their survival, development, human relationship, mental health, care and education have all been seriously threatened.

In this Lecture, I will share with you five major areas, based on international and Hong Kong experience.

- I. Threats and Pressing Needs of Children's Rights and Well-being
- II. A Platform to Make Children Visible as the Uniting Force
- III. Policy, Laws and a Proactive Child Safeguarding System
- IV. Community Empowerment
- V. Children's Participation

I. Threats and Pressing Needs of Children's Rights and Well-being

To start with prior to, and after, the onset of the pandemic's challenges, and especially looking at psychological well-being and online threats, Covid-19 is truly the first global crisis to this devastating degree that we have witnessed in our lifetime.

Save the Children's study of 46 countries and 31,683 parents and caregivers, found that Covid-19 has adversely threatened the holistic well-being of children and their families in different ways. Save the Children in their study also interviewed 13,477 children aged 11 to 17. 65% indicated that their families encountered financial hardships, 38% had family members who were unemployed, only 19% sought help, 21% were being treated with violence, 33% of

disabled children were more vulnerable to violence and unfair treatment. Regarding mental health, 74% worried, 62% were more unhappy than before, and 47% felt hopeless. As for educational opportunities, 26% lacked learning material, 70% of disabled children lacked support and felt discriminated against. 54% felt their voice was not being heard, 54% retained no social groups at all during the lockdown. 51% had to shoulder household chores, 48% cared for their siblings, 35% indicated they had no space to play.

The Foundation of Women's Rights Promotion and Development shared their concerns on gender inequality. Women as main caregivers experienced domestic and sexual violence and reports from the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) found a drastic increase in cases received and suspected that many more are hidden.

A study by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service for 5,900 service users found that 90% of the respondents were unemployed or under-employed and had suffered income reduction; half of whom with income reduced by 50%. 70% of respondents who suffered chronic illnesses worried about infection and thus either reduced in frequency or entirely stopped their medical consultation or treatment. 65% of respondents encountered hardships in their children's schooling and felt anxious.

Another study by the Hong Kong Society for Protection of Children interviewed 449 parents with children under 3. 93.9% worried that their children would be adversely affected because they were staying home for a long time. 82.5% felt like they were struggling and being tied up. 63% observed poor emotional changes in their children. 41.1% of their children enjoyed less than 30 minutes of outdoor activities every day. 37.5% of their 2 to 3-year-old's major activities were on electronic devices. WHO's guidelines indicate that it is not suitable for under 2-year-olds to have contact with electronic devices such as the iPad and mobile phone, while 2 to 4-year-olds' device use should not exceed one hour per day.

Globally, advocates pointed out specifically that the pandemic has increased the social, economic, and gender imbalance. Vaccine injustice, widening gap of poverty and the increase in military expenses are threats to world peace.

Many studies have alerted us to see a code red for humanity, that our society is on fire. Human activity is upending the climate in unprecedented and sometimes irreversible ways. Crimes against mother nature is termed ecocide, which is as shameful as genocide.

A calling, loud and clear, to all of us is that only with immediate combined forces can such catastrophes be averted.

UNICEF in their new report alerted that climate crisis is a child rights crisis. The government must invest, to reduce greenhouse gas emission and to provide children with adequate education and support in environmental protection.

On top of the challenge of climate change, many problems threatening the optimal growth and development of children have lingered on for a long time. Covid-19 has exacerbated the risks and harm done on children and society. The impact will reverberate for a long period, threatening the optimal growth and development of children, the future of our society.

Children want us to see what they see, to listen to what they have to say, to feel the way they feel, to speak up for them, to stop the violence, to make them visible and be their advocates. **For all these years, some important rights of children have been left unaddressed, threatening their survival, growth, development and participation.**

Let me start with psychological well-being. WHO's data prior to 2020 indicated that 300 million people were under the threat of depression. They predicted that from 2020 onwards, depression would be second to coronary disease as the major burden in terms of sickness.

As early as 2005, the Hong Kong Family Health Service's Department of Health's Child Behaviour and Emotion study already indicated that 10 to 13% of 4-year-olds displayed behaviour with potentially significant psychopathology, while 10 to 15% of preschool aged children had behavioural problems. In 2005, the Hong Kong Chinese University's Medical Faculty's study also indicated that around 400,000 adults were suffering from different degrees of depression. Another study on depression found that 53% of secondary school student respondents had depressive symptoms. About 12,000 respondents were seriously depressive, 3,000 had suicidal ideation and, in 2016, 20 students committed suicide.

Intensive early intervention must receive policy and funding support. A 12-year longitudinal study in Hong Kong, beginning in 2001, of 1,000 patients with symptoms such as hallucinations or delusions, found that intensive early intervention programmes for those suffering from psychosis in the first 2 years after diagnosis can cut down their suicide rate by 50%. But Hong Kong has a shortfall of 400 psychiatrists, according to WHO's standards. In Hong Kong, one case manager shoulders about 80 patients, whereas in progressive countries one case manager would have about 10 to 20 patients. Sadly, some children have to queue up over a year for diagnosis and treatment.

The Hong Kong Legislative Council's Welfare Panel on Health Service reviewed mental health concerns, and a Standing Advisory Committee on Mental Health was appointed in 2017. It came up with 40 recommendations in 20 areas. The Committee, in 2019, started to study the mental health conditions of children and adolescents and began with a promotion titled Joyful @ Hong Kong Campaign. The government also increased child capacity-building programmes by increasing the number of parent resource centres from six in 2017 to 19 in 2020. And since 2019, NGOs in Hong Kong have initiated October as Mental Health Month. Dementia-friendly programmes have been introduced. And a group of young people have introduced the 'Just Feel' programme encouraging parents and children to speak up.

The United Kingdom has conducted innovative mental health programmes such as 'Time to Change'. Australia, with three million people living under anxiety or depression, launched their 'Beyond Blue' programme and New Zealand in their 'Like Minds, Like Mine' programme has been working against mental health stigma.

Another significant area left outstanding is the problem of online safety and negative exposure to the virtual world, a huge threat which has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

A study in the early 2000s by an NGO, the Against Child Abuse, interviewed 1,716 Form 1 to 3 students and found that 64% had come across obscene and indecent materials. 40% of them

had received child pornography, 55% contacted strangers known online and 39% actually met these strangers.

Some serious cases reported in the Hong Kong news were: a 15 year-old girl who got a modelling job online went for the job and got brutally killed and raped. A boy constantly bullied online was traumatised and, instead of seeking help and informing the authorities, took his own life. A helper was jailed for 3 months for publishing videos of naked children under her care, in the shower. A ten-year-old girl who spent hours each day online during the Covid-19 lockdown, met a stranger online who claimed to be young as she was. He convinced her to take and send him nude photos and to provide contacts of her friends for such materials to be circulated. One of her classmates' parents found it out and reported the case to the police.

Children, particularly during Covid-19, encounter tremendous stresses and challenge online. Their physical, psychological, social and spiritual well-being have been falling apart. Parents and caregivers, teachers and professionals have not been fully prepared nor supported.

Reports indicate that one in three internet users is a child. Unwanted sexual comments, harassments, sextortion and bullying online are frequently found. Digital safety education is a must and coordination among law enforcement, schools, internet providers is essential. To rebuild the virtual world, the government, ICT industries, educators and parents must share the journey by addressing these challenges.

Advocates have recommended to the Hong Kong government to set up a dedicated hotline with trained personnel to receive reports and render assistance to children, families and caregivers. Schools need to upgrade their child safeguarding policy to educate and reflect current needs and practices. Parents should be guided to upgrade to the latest software and antivirus programmes, dialogue with their children, set rules for usage, be alert to signs of distress, familiarise with local services and be ready to seek help.

The most recent initiative for children by the tech giant Apple has been for a plan to scan iPhones for child abuse images on the internet; which will be sent directly to law enforcement bodies for follow-up action. This may be a controversial initiative, as some people have been concerned about freedom of speech, yet in the sense of child protection it appears to be a positive measure worth active consideration.

For a shared journey to be possible, a constructive change in mindset, balancing children's and adults' best interest, must be put in place. Visionary leadership to champion for children, make children visible in policy, budget administration and practical sense is essential.

II. A Platform for Children: A Children's Commission to champion for the best interest of children and make them visible in all aspects.

With reference to the UN's standards and stipulations, an effective champion for children, a Child Ombudsman or Child Commissioner, should head a statutory commission which is supported by its own team of staff, with funding for research and programmes. It must also be independent, transparent and sustainable. Community, especially children's, participation must be a pre-requisite for effective actualisation of its obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC).

A mechanism of this kind is not new. Norway, the true pioneer, started the first Ombudsman office in 1981. The lady who headed the mission considered children as true experts, regularly met with them and listened to their sharing and recommendations. The office took up cases reported and initiated studies and investigations of children suspected to be at-risk or in harm.

The function of the Ombudsman or the Commissioner includes

- Formulating or amending policy and legislation
- Looking into unjust situations on behalf of children and families
- Having free access to child institutions & information, in order to trace trends, characteristics and contributing factors impacting children's best interest.
- Ensuring education and promotion in child rights and child protection
- Ensuring a quality child protection system for children
- Monitoring and measuring progress

The UN CRC was passed in 1989, made effective in 1990 and ratified by almost all countries except the United States and Somalia. The British government had extended the CRC to Hong Kong in 1994, and the government of China extended the CRC to Hong Kong in 1997. On 1 June 2018, Hong Kong set up a Commission on Children, an advisory body with all government bureaus represented, and appointed 21 non-official members. Advocates continue to appeal for a statutory body that is independent and sustainable.

Currently the world has at least 79 countries with a Children's Commission – 30 of them being independent children's commissions and 49 being under human rights institutions.

III. (A) A Child Policy which reflects child rights principles, and an Action Plan to turn these principles into reality.

To ensure a genuinely shared journey for all, a Child Policy must be written down and made widely known as the direction of society. It must be supported by a holistic and proactive action plan and an effective system to implement and monitor. To trace trends, characteristics and root causes, evidence-based studies must be conducted. Channels for public and children's voices must be properly put in place. Effective advocates must be identified for consensus building and to ensure recognition, solidarity and empowerment.

To facilitate actualising such policy and framework, the Kids Rights Index's 2021 report listed 11 action points for Covid and post-Covid measures by governments. It also listed 5 domains and 7 selected indicators.

11 Child Rights Action Points for Covid and post-Covid measures, issued by the UN CRC on 8 April 2020:

1. Consider the health, social, educational, economic and recreational impacts of the pandemic on the rights of the child.
2. Explore alternative and creative solutions for children to enjoy their rights to rest, leisure, recreation and cultural and artistic activities.

3. Ensure that online learning does not exacerbate existing inequalities or replace student-teacher interaction.
4. Activate immediate measures to ensure that children are fed nutritious food.
5. Maintain the provision of basic services for children including healthcare, water, sanitation and birth registration.
6. Define core child protection services as essential and ensure that they remain functioning and available, including home visits when necessary, and provide professional mental health services for children living in lockdown.
7. Protect children whose vulnerability is further increased by the exceptional circumstances caused by the pandemic.
8. Release children in all forms of detention, whenever possible, and provide children who cannot be released with the means to maintain regular contact with their families.
9. Prevent the arrest or detention of children for violating State guidance and directives relating to COVID-19, and ensure that any child who was arrested or detained is immediately returned to his or her family
10. Disseminate accurate information about COVID-19 and how to prevent infection in languages and formats that are child-friendly and accessible to all children.
11. Provide opportunities for children's views to be heard and taken into account in decision-making processes on the pandemic.

5 Domains:

1. Right to Life
2. Right to Health
3. Right to Education
4. Right to Protection
5. Enabling Environment for Child Rights

7 selected indicators

1. Non-discrimination
2. Best interests of the child
3. Respect for the views of the child/child participation
4. Enabling national legislation
5. Mobilisation of the 'best available' budget
6. Collection and analysis of disaggregated data; and
7. State and civil society cooperation for children's rights

In 2015, the Hong Kong Paediatric Society, and Hong Kong Paediatric Foundation, together with child healthcare professionals compiled a proposal on Child Health Policy for submission to the government. The proposal came into being with 4 drafting groups, 6 public forums and numerous professional consultations. Now the report is in the hands of our Commission on Children for review.

III. (B) A Sound Child Protection System

Policy will remain as a policy unless a sound implementation system is put in place.

In the best interests of children, a specialised child protection system has been put in place in Hong Kong, first piloted by the Against Child Abuse, with a hotline since 1983. The Hong Kong government provides specialised services under the Social Welfare Department's Family and Child Protective Services Unit. Hospitals have child abuse medical coordinators. The Police have a Family Conflict and Sexual Violence Policy Unit. In our courts and Department of Justice, we have prosecutors.

To monitor policies and practices first a working group later upgraded to a Committee on Child Abuse, chaired by the Director of Social Welfare, shoulders an advisory role of monitoring policies and practices.

In December 2011, Hong Kong introduced the Sexual Conviction Record Check system, under the Hong Kong Police Force, to provide employers with a channel to ascertain applicants for work relating to children or mentally incapacitated persons, to ensure they have no sexual conviction records. However, the system is non-compulsory and not all-inclusive.

We need data to understand trends and characteristics, for service planning and budgetary allocation. Hong Kong is in the process of conducting a feasibility study on a central data bank to consolidate the different records and registries, so that they are more consistent, inclusive and efficient in retrieving data and statistics for planning, support for children, families and resource allocation.

What is fundamental in getting the field together is an effective and non-bureaucratic system operated by passionate, devoted, well-trained multidisciplinary personnel with adequate manpower, resourced and supported by quality management and supervisory personnel - through the case management process with stakeholders', children in particular, participation.

Prevention is as important as cure. For a system to be preventive, a three level intervention system must be properly put in place, with the top of the triangle being tertiary, to identify and work with those harmed or adversely affected. The secondary level, to early identify and work with the at risks. And the primary Level for total reform to impact value, mindset and culture for children.

III. (C) Child Law as Society's Baseline

For any system to be effective, statutory support as the baseline is essential.

The law has education and direction value, and it helps to protect the rights and well-being of citizens; adults and children alike. It sanctions those who violate the law and deters future violation.

Advocates in Hong Kong have persistently appealed to the government to conduct a comprehensive review of child related ordinances and to formulate a children's act which incorporates the stipulations of the UN CRC.

Hong Kong in 2003 amended the Child Pornography Ordinance to criminalise those who possess, in addition to produce and disseminate, child pornography, actual and virtual images alike. Sentencing guidelines have also been drawn up to tackle various degrees of sanctions.

More proactive reforms in law have taken place in different parts of the world. Some examples include UK's Children's Act, which was introduced in 2004, and UK's Children's Commission, which was set up as a result of a huge outcry for little Victoria Climbié, a 4-year-old who died a tragic death. UK has also made it a crime if one causes the death of a child or should have known the child was at significant risk of serious harm and failed to take reasonable steps to prevent it. Similar laws have been enacted in South Australia and New Zealand.

In UK and Australia, witnessing domestic violence is defined as abuse and children are protected by law. More recently, Scotland has voted stipulations from the UN CRC into their child law.

As to the banning of corporal punishment, there are at least 62 states that have banned corporal punishment in all settings, including at home. 27 other states have made commitments to do the same.

Sweden, a true pioneer, banned corporal punishment in 1979. New Zealand banned it in 2007; their rate of approval of corporal punishment had dropped from more than 90% in 1981 to 40% in 2013. Scotland banned corporal punishment in 2019, although its impact has yet to be measured.

You may wish to refer to the Global Report 2019 by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, to better understand the rationale and progress. Their international guidance, Together to #ENDviolence, Solutions Summit Series, June 2012, may also be inspiring as to laying the foundation for a non-violent childhood, putting the prohibition of corporal punishment of children into practice.

The banning of corporal punishment must start now. To urge the Hong Kong government to close the gap, by a total ban of corporal punishment, advocates have made special efforts for 30 April to be an Anti-Spanking Day to present, in a big public event, a declaration with the signatories of 10,000 individuals and agencies to the government. The declaration specifies that violence comes in different forms. The corporal punishment of children is a form of violence and a violation of children's rights. It is necessary to set the same standards that apply to adults. While there is nothing wrong with child discipline, there are better non-violent means to guide and to teach.

To trace trends, characteristics and root causes, Hong Kong piloted an Advisory Child Fatality Review Panel, which presented two reports, and formed an on-going Advisory Review Panel, which presented four more reports. Yet the system, not addressing specific death cases and being advisory, shoulders no monitoring role.

Some fundamental systems are still outstanding and need to be addressed.

A Child Fatality Inquiry and a Mandatory Reporting System would ensure that serious cases are being identified and help is brought in promptly. A comprehensive child law reform to reflect the UN CRC stipulations is essential. While the government has started consultations on mandatory reporting, there are hesitations. Firstly, there is concern about the possibility of a sudden increase in caseload, and whether the existing manpower would be able to cope. Secondly, the definition of serious harm is non-specific. Thirdly, there is concern about 'punishing' professionals in the frontline and adversely affecting their relationship with clients. Fourthly, families may be reluctant to seek help because of the law. All of these must be thoroughly addressed. However, a firm emphasis on children's best interest and well-being must be the way forward.

IV. Positive Parenting and Community Empowerment

For a caring and non-violent childhood, the law alone is not enough. Building a caring, respecting and violence-free culture must be made a norm.

A violence-free notion must start at home. Positive parenting in the family, starting from early childhood, matters. Community empowerment paves the way for a hopeful future. **The values of self-discipline, responsibility, respect, public good and consideration for the rights of others – children and adults – form the important cornerstones of parenting.** Let me share two evidence-based effective programmes for your consideration.

(A) Head Start Home Visitation

In one of the international conferences, the Head Start programmes were shared and inspired the operations in Hong Kong, leading to the Against Child Abuse rendering a modified version, sustained through the decades by experienced and dedicated volunteers who were caring mothers themselves. They were first trained and then helped to train and support others to march through a challenging new start for their families.

The Hong Kong government, inspired by the concept, in its policy address, specified the importance of the 0 to 5 early childhood years, and devoted resources to start off a comprehensive Child Development Service in 2005. The project, which has been sustained up to the present, involves a collaboration between the Hong Kong Department of Health's Hospital Authority, the Social Welfare Department, the Education Bureau and NGOs.

In view of resource constraints, instead of making the project universal, four types of at-risk groups are chosen as targets:

- At-risk pregnant women
- Mothers with post-natal depression
- Children & families with psycho-social needs
- Pre-primary children with physical, developmental and behavioural needs

However, it is important to set up support networks, and to build and strengthen family resilience before problems surface. Child Advocates have been calling for a review of this 16-year-old programme, to trace trends, characteristics, assess impact, understand programme

value and expand the scope of support and empowerment to more children and families in Hong Kong.

(B) Triple P - Positive Parenting Programme

Another evidence-based programme worth mentioning is the Triple P: Positive Parenting Programme for families with children aged 3 to 8 years old in Australia. The programme gives parents the tools to take their stress out and encourage positive behaviour from children by dealing positively and consistently with problem behaviours and developing intimate positive family relationships. Triple P offers practical skills and tools to help parents:

- Develop positive relationships with their child
- Set family routines and rules that work
- Manage problem behaviour and support positive behaviour
- Raise well-adjusted emotionally resilient children
- Balance work and family with less stress
- Create a happier, safer, more supportive family so they can be the parents they want to be

As of 2017, the Queensland government has invested AUD\$12 million to implement a state-wide roll out of the programme, to provide free Triple P to all parents of children from birth to 16 years old. To date, in Queensland alone, more than 210,000 parents have participated in one or more levels of Triple P, at least 760 providers have been trained, and partnerships have been established with more than 150 government and non-governmental agencies.

V. Child Empowerment and Participation

A truly shared journey safeguarding our future must include our children. Children are stakeholders and they not only have things to say, but they have much to offer. They are the potential change agents.

Make our reconstruction map child-friendly and empower children to participate.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates, in their Article 12 (1), “State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views, the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”

And Article 13 (1) indicated that “The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, to receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice.”

Article 13 (2) must also be emphasised and be included in child rights education. It indicates that “The exercising of this right may be subject to certain restrictions but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary.

- a. For respect of the rights or reputation of others
- b. For the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals

To actualise genuine child participation, let's take a minute to see the children's participation ladder. The lower it goes, the more primitive and limited is a child's participation. The higher it goes, the more sophisticated and the more potential of the child's participation to be actualised.

But to ensure constructive participation, the child must be fully informed, in their own language, in child-friendly setting, at their own pace and, if necessary, to be separately represented. They must also be promised confidentiality in what they share, for their case to be promptly handled and for their views to be given due weight. These are principles which adults must learn to acquire.

Through the decades, Hong Kong has been trying to honour the commitment of respecting child participation by first piloting and then implementing various on-going child participation programmes. To name a few:

Let the Dolphin Lead is a programme the Against Child Abuse started, based on the notion that children are endangered in different ways, because of natural and man-made 'pollutions'; just as what our lovely dolphins have been experiencing in the Hong Kong waters. We had invited children from higher forms to join and receive training as mentors to lead and guide children in lower forms, through music, play, artwork, surveys, debates – for their articulations on family, school, the community and the government. Their work and their voices were shared in a large-scale public forum and presented to key government officials and the Chair of the Youth Commission.

The programme has evolved into a Child Council to replicate the Legislative Council System in Hong Kong, with children as councillors who make their own selection of topics for their own research and conduct interviews with key opinion leaders in the public and private fields. At the beginning stage, the project attracted only elite schools which sent their students, but along the way all types of schools had students joining and actively participating. The Hong Kong Legislative Council had, in the past, let us use their chamber for the programme. Currently we have transferred to the university chambers for our meeting venues. Our special appreciation to the Hong Kong Constitutional and Mainland Bureau for funding the project through the years.

There are government-led child participation programmes in Hong Kong as well. The Hong Kong Legislative Council hearings have for quite some years included children for verbal and written submissions in their hearings of important issues impacting children. The government has also set up a Children's Forum for child representatives and child advocates. Child engagement programmes have been organised, particularly for children with specific needs.

Overseas countries' experience of child participation started early. Norway started as early as 1981 with considering children as expert advisors. Their ombudsman has been regularly meeting with children and listening to their voices. New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern had, during the pandemic, met children online to understand their needs. Scottish

cabinet meetings have been receiving members of their Children's Parliament to understand their concerns.

One of the very impressive experiences has been that of the Australian Children Commissioner's "Big Banter" national listening tour, to hear the views of children and their advocates throughout Australia. The commissioner had met face to face with over 1,000 children and online with another 1,400 children, as well as with child advocates to explore issues most important to children. The five most mentioned areas by children and advocates were:

- A right to be heard,
- Freedom from violence, abuse & neglect
- The opportunity to thrive
- Engaged citizenship
- Action and accountability of policy makers and authorities

There are also inspiring surveys and studies that convey children's voices and their inner workings. **We as adults must help children to build capacity, increase resilience, equip them with skills, knowledge and opportunities to harness their energy for positive change and to face the ever-changing world. We have to believe that children and youths have the potential to create solutions for the unique challenges of their generation.**

The World Health Organization is so right to say that no one is safe until everyone is safe. For everyone to be safe, we must come together to rebuild our world. Though the pandemic has exerted such a strong, destructive force upon us, a pandemic solidarity is still possible in bringing the best out of people. Reminding us that acts of kindness, such as supporting each other, volunteering for each other, singing to one another, sharing and donating to others, have remained so important in helping to counter threats and desperations.

We salute our selfless medics and healthcare personnel who have taken risks (not only on themselves but also on their families) and made great sacrifices in order to keep us safe. Let these beautiful acts and lovely artworks lift us up, our spirit, to see that if 'Mind Aware, World Awake'. To spread love and not hatred. And to remind us that there is no quarantine on kindness.

Let children be our shared vision, our common goal and purpose of the journey in reconstructing a future that is welcoming, safe, caring and respectful for us all. Show children how to respect the rights of others, by us demonstrating a respect for their rights.