

Paper presented by  
Datuk Karim Sulaiman,  
Chairman, Youth and Sports Melaka

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good Evening,

It gives me great pleasure to officiate at this Gala Dinner, which is an occasion to mark the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> Melaka International Youth Dialogue, as well as a platform to appreciate the contributions of corporate sponsors who contributed so generously thereby enabling this event to take place.

I am pleased that the Dialogue has touched on most of the issues it set out to address and has resulted in the Melaka International Youth Declaration. Many participants have reported that they learnt something new and that their experience here was both beneficial and enjoyable.

This year's theme was not as straightforward as it may seem. Such topics are usually met with much scepticism and even here some participants doubted the pragmatism of this subject. I am glad that by the conclusion of this

Dialogue most of the doubt about achieving success in this area was replaced by a measure of hope.

This optimism is as a direct result of hearing the different strategies in place to combat drug abuse from different countries and the success rates and also due to the exchange of ideas that resulted in some new information being discovered.

Youth are the future and your being here is a testimony to the fact that you are not willing to stand by and watch as drugs tear our society apart. Through the plenary sessions and workshops we have succeeded in meeting our objectives. The contributions have resulted in a declaration that was adopted this morning.

Each of you are representing a youth council or organisation that ensures that the youth agenda is not sidelined and that young people are given an equal opportunity to participate in the development of the nation. I would like to emphasise that the success of the Dialogue is not simply in reaching a declaration but in implementing it.

United as one body, we can turn this aspiration into a reality. As has been highlighted, it is only through collaborative efforts and partnerships between NGOs, government and the private sector that we can attain a significant decrease in the rates of drug abuse.

I have also been informed that apart from the discussions that took place there was a gala dinner hosted by the Right Honourable Datuk Seri Ali Bin Mohd Rustam and river cruise where many of yo