

## CS calls on international organisations in Geneva (with photos)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung who is currently in Geneva, Switzerland, called on senior representatives of several international organisations to foster mutual understanding and keep them abreast of Hong Kong's latest development.

Today, (November 9, Geneva time), Mr Cheung called on the Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Mr Guy Ryder, to brief him on Hong Kong's latest development in enhancing employees' benefits and support such as the proposals to abolish the "offsetting" arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme, extend maternity leave period and strengthen protection for grassroot employees and employees injured at work.

Mr Cheung pointed out that the current-term Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government was committed to enhancing employees' benefits. In the process, the Government will strike a balance between the interests of employers and employees. ILO is devoted to promoting social justice and internationally recognised labour rights.

On November 7 (Geneva time), Mr Cheung also met the Director of Member Services and Promotion Branch of the International Social Security Association (ISSA), Mr Graham Minton, and Head of the ISSA's Office of the Secretary General, Mr Jens Schremmer, to exchange views on setting up and managing an effective social security system.

He also outlined Hong Kong's support to the under-privileged, such as Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, Higher Old Age Living Allowance and Working Family Allowance Scheme.

Mr Cheung pointed out that the HKSAR Government had all along been committed to improving people's livelihood and that social welfare expenditure rose 86 per cent over the past six years. He added that a range of initiatives had been announced in the Policy Address this year to support families and alleviate poverty.

Founded under the auspices of the ILO, the ISSA aims at promoting excellence in social security administration through professional guidelines, expert knowledge, services and support to enable its members to develop dynamic social security systems and policies throughout the world.

Mr Cheung later called on the World Health Organization (WHO) and met its Assistant Director-General and Chef de Cabinet, Dr Bernhard Schwartländer. Mr Cheung stressed that the HKSAR Government would continue to maintain close liaison with the WHO in enhancing co-operation and exchanges on public health issues.

He pointed out that to meet the increasing demand for healthcare

services arising from an ageing population, the HKSAR Government had already planned ahead the necessary healthcare infrastructure and set aside a total of HK\$500 billion for these purposes. In tandem with the implementation of projects under the first 10-year hospital development plan, the Hospital Authority had been invited to commence planning for the second 10-year hospital development plan.

