

Opening remarks by S for IT at ASTRI Smart City Forum (English only)

Following are the opening remarks by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit, at the Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute Company Limited (ASTRI) Smart City Forum today (March 22):

Sunny (Board Chairman of ASTRI, Mr Sunny Lee), Ching-choi (Non-official Member of the Executive Council Dr Lam Ching-choi), Rebecca (Commissioner for Innovation and Technology, Ms Rebecca Pun), Lucas (Acting Co-CEO and Chief Technology Officer of ASTRI, Dr Lucas Hui), Martin (Acting Co-CEO and Chief Operating Officer of ASTRI, Dr Martin Szeto), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It is my great honour to join you all today at ASTRI Smart City Forum, bringing together business and industry leaders, researchers as well as our friends and partners in the innovation and technology (I&T) ecosystem, to share views and explore ways to make Hong Kong smarter.

Following the publication of the first Smart City Blueprint for Hong Kong in 2017, we released the Smart City Blueprint 2.0 (Blueprint 2.0) in last December. This Blueprint 2.0 contains more than 130 smart city initiatives across six smart areas, namely "Smart Mobility", "Smart Living", "Smart Environment", "Smart People", "Smart Government" and "Smart Economy", and specifically includes a new chapter on "Use of I&T in combating COVID-19" as well as ideas of exploring smart village pilots in rural areas. Initiatives included in the Blueprint 2.0 are going to bring benefits and convenience to members of the public, allowing them to better perceive the benefits of smart city and I&T in their daily lives.

Among all these exciting initiatives, I would like to highlight an important digital infrastructure for our smart city development, the "iAM Smart" platform, which was launched about three months ago. "iAM Smart" is a one-stop personalised digital services platform which enables users to log in and access commonly used online services through their personal mobile phones. There are now more than 30 commonly used online services of the Government and public utilities accessible through this platform, for example the COVID-19 Electronic Vaccination and Testing Record System. By mid of this year, users may gain access to more than 110 online services of the Government, public utilities as well as commercial organisations through this convenient platform. If you have yet to experience the convenience brought by this mobile app, I strongly encourage you to download it now and try it out.

Developing Hong Kong into a smart city is undoubtedly an important commitment of the Government. However, the full participation of the private sector, academia and research institutes is also of paramount importance to help us move towards this goal. I am glad to learn that many of the

technologies developed by ASTRI could play a part in our smart city development in various aspects. For example, its Cellular Vehicle-to-Everything C-V2X technology for the development as well as application of autonomous vehicle technology, and its AI as well as machine learning technologies for the development of a Cervical Cancer Screening Management System, are both highly relevant in supporting the objective of making Hong Kong smarter in its transportation system and healthcare system respectively.

On the "Smart Economy" aspect, ASTRI, as commissioned by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, published a white paper on alternative credit scoring of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in last November. It sets out how Hong Kong can take advantage of AI and machine learning to explore a wide variety of data from many sources to assess the creditworthiness of MSMEs, with a view to improving access to finance for MSMEs.

Let's not forget that all these technologies could only be developed, improved and sustained with the support and input from our tech talent. As such, we have been making continuous efforts to cultivate the young people's interest in innovation and technology. In the 2020/21 school year, we launched the IT Innovation Lab in Secondary Schools Programme to cultivate an interest in information technology among secondary school students, and enhance their digital skills, computational thinking and innovative abilities. We have received an overwhelming response with over 110 applications as at end of this February, just three months after the programme was opened for application. We will be extending this IT cultivation programme to primary schools through a new Knowing More About IT Programme in the 2021/22 school year which aims to enhance primary school students' interest to pursue the study of STEM subjects and to prepare for their integration into the digital society in the future.

I am glad that ASTRI has also been playing an active role in nurturing I&T talent. Earlier this month, ASTRI signed a memorandum of understanding with the Faculty of Engineering of the Chinese University of Hong Kong to take forward a Smart City Technology Oriented Practitioner programme. ASTRI will provide paid full-time employment opportunities to enrolled students for a period of four to eight months and engage them in ASTRI's ongoing smart city-related projects. By giving our young people hands-on experience, we are also giving fresh impetus to our smart city development.

There are many more smart city initiatives under the Blueprint 2.0 and those being taken forward by ASTRI. All these will enable the public to enjoy a more convenient and smarter life. In Hong Kong's journey to embrace I&T and become a smarter city, I am sure there is a lot more we could do and achieve together. May I appeal to you all to join hands with us to make our city smarter, to further bring benefits and convenience to our people's daily lives with innovation and technology.

Last but not least, I would like to thank ASTRI for inviting me to this Forum. I wish the Forum every success and all participants a fruitful sharing. Thank you very much.