Opening remarks by S for IT at Symposium on Innovation & Technology (English only) (with photo)

Following is the transcript of the opening remarks by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang, at the Symposium on Innovation & Technology today (October 13):

Victor (Chairman of the Hong Kong Electronics & Technologies Association, Mr Victor Choi), Franklin (Chairman of 2018 Organising Committee of the Symposium, Mr Franklin Chan), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is wonderful to be back again at the Hong Kong Electronics Fair, with so many people out there, queening up to get in. It is also my pleasure to join you all at the "Symposium on Innovation and Technology". This year, the theme is "AI Empowerment – Grow without Limits". First of all, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to our distinguished guests, industry leaders, experts and researchers from around the world.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been developing rapidly around the globe. The manufacturing industry has adopted more AI technologies than ever to optimise production lines, testing systems and inventory management, so as to enhance industrial automation and thus improve operational efficiency. Some other industries have also applied AI technologies to modify existing business models and procedures. With the use of AI technologies, employees can focus on innovative and high value-adding work to drive business growth and increase productivity.

Three days ago, the Chief Executive delivered her second Policy Address. Again, innovation and technology (I&T) continues to be high on the agenda. An additional $28 billion will be invested on I&T development, in upstream, midstream and downstream. Further injection in upstream R&D will unleash the R&D capabilities of our universities and research institutions. To boost midstream and translational R&D, we double our funding support for both the Technology Transfer Offices of local universities and the Technology Start-up Support Scheme for Universities.

Downstream, we propose new measures to boost "re-industrialisation" and encourage high-end manufacturing. Subsidies will be offered to manufacturers on a matching basis to set up smart production lines in Hong Kong under a $2 billion "Re-industrialisation Funding Scheme". Another $2 billion will be allocated to HKSTPC (Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation) to identify suitable land in the Industrial Estates for building advanced manufacturing facilities. What we encourage is high-technology content, high value-added, smart production which requires less land. I am glad that all our chambers of commerce are very positive towards these new re-industrialisation initiatives. I am confident that the new measures will add

momentum to I&T development of Hong Kong.

On promoting AI development, the Government has set AI as one of our key focused technology areas. We are establishing two world-class research clusters in Hong Kong Science Park, one of which is "AIR@InnoHK" focusing on AI and robotics technologies. We are actively negotiating with a number of leading universities and R&D institutions both from overseas and the Mainland to join these clusters. So far their responses have been very encouraging. For example, the Institut Pasteur of France, the RWTH Aachen University of Germany, as well as the Guangzhou Institute of Biomedicine and Health and the Institute of Automation in Beijing under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, have already expressed keen interest.

In addition, we are actively strengthening co-operation with the Mainland and overseas. We have a couple of good news last month. The Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) has shown its solid support again for I&T development in Hong Kong. The "Arrangement on Enhancing Innovation and Technology Cooperation between the Mainland and Hong Kong" and the "Agreement on Commencing Jointly Funded Projects between the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Innovation and Technology Bureau of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government" were signed last month. The two sides will enhance co-operation in six key areas, including scientific research, development of platforms, nurturing of talents, transfer of results and incubation of the I&T industry, integration into national development strategies, and cultivation of an I&T ambience.

The second Agreement sets out the funding model and modus operandi of the Mainland-Hong Kong Joint Funding Scheme. We hope the Scheme can encourage further collaboration between Hong Kong and provinces of the Mainland in the area of scientific research.

Furthermore, MOST has entrusted the home-grown SenseTime Group Limited to establish the "National Open Innovation Platform for Next Generation Artificial Intelligence on Intelligent Vision". The company, founded by a number of local scholars in 2014, has emerged as China's biggest AI unicorn in recent years. Its leading position in AI has now been further recognised along with its coming participation in the national development and planning for the next generation of AI, which is definitely a vote of confidence in Hong Kong's strengths in I&T.

The Government will devote more resources to enhance Hong Kong's R&D and application capabilities in the AI field, train relevant talents and support technology enterprises.

We will also adopt more AI technologies in our public services and city management, spanning cyber security, customs inspection and transport. For example, we will introduce AI and chatbot functions to the GovHK portal in 2019 to facilitate searching and access of e-Government services by the general public; and pilot the use of chatbot to handle 1823 public enquiries. A new big data analytics platform will be built by 2020 to enable real-time data sharing among government departments, encouraging further development of

AI applications and big data analytics.

     In closing, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Hong Kong Electronics and Technologies Association and the Trade Development Council for organising this Symposium, and gathering professionals in the field to discuss on the future of AI development. I wish the Symposium every success. Thank you and wish you all enjoy the sharing and discussion at the Symposium as well as the Electronics Fair right outside.