

Opening remarks by SLW at opening ceremony of Gerontech and Innovation Expo cum Summit 2021 (English only)

Following are the opening remarks by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, at the opening ceremony of the Gerontech and Innovation Expo cum Summit 2021 jointly hosted by the Government and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) this morning (November 3):

Bernard (Chairperson of HKCSS, Mr Bernard Chan), Dr Chai (Chairman of Board of Directors of Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation, Dr Sunny Chai), Mr Chu (Assistant President of China Merchants Group Limited and Executive Vice Chairman of China Merchants Foundation, Mr Chu Zongsheng), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning! It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the Gerontech and Innovation Expo cum Summit (GIES) 2021, or in short, the GIES 2021.

Hong Kong residents enjoy the world's longest life expectancy. Estimates by the Census and Statistics Department forecast that come 2040, there would be over half a million population aged 85 or above. Understandably, this rapidly ageing population is going to present challenges to the community; notably, increasing demands on medical and care services. Innovative ways and means to improve our elderly's quality of life and their self-care ability rank high on our priority list. Now, here's where innovative technology comes in. I honestly believe that gerontechnology is the answer.

In an effort to equip the care sector with technological products and solutions, the Government launched a \$1 billion Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care (I&T Fund) in December 2018. This I&T Fund has since been subsidising elderly and rehabilitation service units to procure and rent technology products to enhance their quality of service to the elderly while relieving the pressure and burden of the staff who take care of them. So far, the I&T Fund has approved more than \$380 million to assist over 1 300 elderly and rehabilitation service units for the procurement and rental of almost 10 000 technology products.

You will be able to find out more about the I&T Fund at today's displays in the Smart City Quality Service Pavilion. There, you will also find a Gerontechnology Platform, supported by the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Fund. This Platform is run by the HKCSS in collaboration with nine organisations. A key function of this Platform is to facilitate and enhance the abilities of relevant parties in their adoption and utilisation of gerontechnology in respective service settings.

To encourage community-wide adoption of gerontechnology, the Government

needs the assistance of different sectors of the community. We are fortunate to find a long-time partner in the HKCSS, the organiser of the GIES. Since its inauguration in 2017, the GIES has become an annual flagship event as well as an important platform to connect stakeholders of various sectors, both locally and abroad. I understand that this year's Summit will be featuring keynote and plenary sessions on the application of gerontechnology under the "age-at-home" setting. Forty local and international experts will also be sharing with us their views on medical-social collaboration and technology through webinars. At the same time, 160 exhibitors will be showcasing some 600 innovative products from 31 countries and areas. I am particularly impressed to find many overseas manufacturers, who were undeterred by travel restrictions and have chosen to take part in the Expo.

It is exciting to know that some of the products are making their debut in Hong Kong for the first time. Those include rollators with rhythmic cues for Parkinson's patients, patented AI (artificial intelligence) fall detection and behavioural analysis device, and lightweight soft exo-suit for stroke rehabilitation. We have our locally developed products, too, such as the portable immersive XR (extended reality) training system and contactless vital sign detection radar. I can go on listing the new products, but I shall stop short here, knowing how eager you must be to see for yourself how those incredible innovations look like and how they work.

Last but not least, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the HKCSS for organising the Expo for the fifth year running. My gratitude also goes to the China Merchants Foundation and the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation for their generous sponsorships and support which make this Expo possible. May I wish the Expo a huge success and all of you a most fruitful experience.

Thank you!