

SEN's opening remarks at LegCo Finance Committee special meeting

Following is the English translation of the opening remarks by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, at the special meeting of the Legislative Council Finance Committee this afternoon (April 11):

Chairman,

The Financial Secretary continues to support Hong Kong's work on various fronts to combat climate change and protect the environment in the Budget this year.

The Environment Bureau announced last October Hong Kong's Climate Action Plan 2050, setting out four major decarbonisation strategies, namely net-zero electricity generation, energy saving and green buildings, green transport, and waste reduction, to lead Hong Kong to achieving carbon neutrality before 2050.

This year's Budget has proposed an allocation of over \$10 billion to projects for combating climate change. Technological development plays a pivotal role in achieving carbon neutrality. The Government will inject an additional funding of \$200 million into the Green Tech Fund (GTF). We estimate that the injection could support about 40 research and development (R&D) projects relevant to net-zero electricity generation, energy saving and green buildings, green transport, and waste reduction. The injection will not only further promote decarbonisation and enhance environmental protection in Hong Kong, but also create job opportunities for the innovation and technology sector. The second round of applications has recently closed in February. About 100 applications have been received. I hope the local public research institutes, R&D centres and private companies will continue to actively make use of the opportunities offered by the GTF to develop low-carbon and green technologies that meet the specific needs of the Hong Kong and regional environment and market. The Budget also announced the plan to seek funding approval of about \$8.4 billion this year for carrying out drainage improvement works in various districts to enhance the flood control capability, with a view to better coping with the risks of rising sea levels and extreme waves caused by climate change.

On green transport, according to the Hong Kong Roadmap on Popularisation of Electric Vehicles issued last year, we will cease new registration of fuel-propelled and hybrid private cars in 2035 or earlier, continue to formulate trials for various electric and hydrogen fuel cell commercial vehicles, expand the electric vehicle (EV) charging network, and more, with the aim of attaining zero vehicular emissions before 2050. In view of the continued rapid growth of the EV market and the positive market response to our EV-charging at Home Subsidy Scheme, the Budget has proposed to inject an additional \$1.5 billion to extend the Scheme for four years. The overall \$3.5

billion subsidy scheme will support the installation of chargingâ€‘enabling infrastructure for a total of about 140 000 parking spaces in some 700 car parks in existing private residential buildings, accounting for about half of the eligible parking spaces in Hong Kong. On the other hand, the Government is making preparations to gradually convert some existing petrol or liquefied petroleum gas filling stations into quick charging stations, so as to support a more diversified EV charging infrastructure to cope with different needs.

As regards the promotion of waste reduction and recycling, the Government will set up more smart recycling points as part of an expanded smart recycling pilot programme, and continue to upgrade the current community recycling support through enhancement of the community recycling network and Green Outreach services, and more. In addition, the relevant bill on municipal solid waste charging was passed by the Legislative Council in August 2021. The Environmental Protection Department is actively commencing preparatory work.

Last but not least, the Government will extend the rental concession for tenants in the EcoPark, country parks and the Hong Kong Wetland Park for another six months amid the fight against the epidemic and to get through the difficult times together.

My colleagues and I are happy to listen to Members' views and respond to questions.

Thank you, Chairman.