

Speech by CE at 9th Global Conference of the Alliance for Healthy Cities opening ceremony (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the 9th Global Conference of the Alliance for Healthy Cities opening ceremony today (November 3):

Mr Lee (Chairman of the Steering Committee of the Alliance for Healthy Cities (AFHC), Mr Jung Hun Lee), George (Chairman of the AFHC, China Hong Kong Chapter, Mr George Ng), Philip (Chairman of the Hong Kong Jockey Club, Mr Philip Chen), Scarlett (Organising Committee Chairman of the 9th Global Conference of the AFHC and Vice-Chairman of the AFHC, China Hong Kong Chapter, Ms Scarlett Pong), Donald (President of the World Organization of Family Doctors, Dr Donald Li), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is a great pleasure to be here today for the opening of the 9th Global Conference of the Alliance for Healthy Cities.

Seven years ago, I addressed the sixth conference of this vital global Alliance right here in Hong Kong, then as the Chief Secretary for Administration. I'm delighted to be back, speaking today in my capacity as the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, to a distinguished audience comprising health specialists and researchers, government leaders and educators, along with architects, designers and professionals representing every aspect of the urban environment.

It is immensely reassuring to know that everyone taking in this three-day, international gathering believes in the future of our cities as dazzling places to live and work in, to raise a family in, to be educated, entertained and inspired by. All of us, in one way or another, are working to make our cities more attractive and livable, flush with affordable and innovative healthcare and education, shaped by inclusive and environmentally friendly programmes and priorities.

This year's conference takes its theme from the COVID-19 pandemic that has, for nearly two years now, shaken the world, shattering so much of what we had long taken for granted in our cities, our economies and our day-to-day lives. The COVID-19 pandemic has, in particular, presented exceptional challenges to public health authorities around the world. Hong Kong is no exception.

That said, our response has been by and large effective. To date, Hong Kong has had less than 13 000 cases, which means about 1 650 cases per million people, one of the lowest among the world's economies. What's more,

Hong Kong has yet to experience a city lockdown, as has been the case in many major cities. This is a significant achievement for a city as compact and densely populated as Hong Kong and with cross-border and international travel maintained. For a few months now, we have basically achieved "zero infection" in our city. People's lives here have largely returned to normal, and our economy this year is showing encouraging signs of recovery.

That we have reached this point in the pandemic is nothing less than a collective achievement. That's thanks to the concerted efforts of government planning and our healthcare system – the administrators, doctors, nurses and support staff who have worked so hard to bring the virus under control. That's also thanks to the people of Hong Kong, who have complied with the anti-epidemic rules despite the inconvenience. We are also grateful to the Central Government for their unwavering support on various fronts.

We have learnt a great deal in our fight against COVID-19. For example, we will look to further promote medical-social collaboration in our primary healthcare services, further invest in research and development and more readily apply innovation and technology in healthcare and many other areas in the future. I am sure when we eventually overcome COVID-19, the experience we have gained will help us become a smarter healthy city, as the theme of this year's Global Conference suggests.

I am grateful to the China Hong Kong Chapter of the Alliance for its superb organisation of this Healthy Cities Conference. My thanks, as well, to the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust for its welcome sponsorship. I wish you all a very rewarding conference. Thank you very much.

