

Speech by CE at H-175 helicopter delivery ceremony at Airbus Helicopters in Marseille (English only)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the H-175 helicopter delivery ceremony at Airbus Helicopters in Marseille, France today (June 18, Marseille time):

Mr Even (Chief Executive Officer of Airbus Helicopters, Mr Bruno Even), Mr Lemoyne (State Secretary to the Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs, Mr Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I am delighted to be here today at Airbus Helicopters to formally accept three new H-175 helicopters on behalf of the Government Flying Service (GFS) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government.

They look impressive, I must say. I know our Flying Service can't wait to get them into the skies over Hong Kong. And we all look forward to delivery of the other four before this year's end.

I am grateful to Airbus Helicopters and for the many people involved in the production of these helicopters, especially Mr Even, for his assistance in arranging today's programme and, of course, for its meticulous efforts in enabling the smooth production of the new helicopters. The quality and professionalism of Airbus Helicopters is something we have come to expect, having been good partners now for more than 17 years. Our cooperation began in 2001. From Eurocopter, Airbus Helicopters' predecessor, we purchased seven helicopters – four B1 Dauphins and three L2 Super Pumas.

The seven Eurocopters in the GFS fleet have served as trusted transport for our GFS crew in all kinds of emergency operations. Indeed, our GFS crew have to work under extremely testing weather conditions and demanding operating environments, including long-range search-and-rescue missions over our seas and mountains, along with patient transfers, fire-fighting and law enforcement. And, let me add, they also include the mega-typhoons we have been hit within these past few years, as well as our disaster-relief efforts during the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. I still remember 10 years ago, following the GFS search and rescue service in the Sichuan earthquake, President Xi Jinping, who was then the Vice President of the People's Republic of China, came to Hong Kong and went to the hanger to specially thank the GFS pilots and crew for the wonderful job done. All in all, I'm told that the seven Eurocopters in the GFS fleet have rescued more than 6 700 lives in Hong Kong and the South China Sea, while providing air medical services for well over 25 000 patients. With that very much in mind, I would say this is a fitting time and opportunity to thank both the professionals at Airbus Helicopters

and GFS for a job well done.

Looking ahead, the new H-175 fleet brings together the most advanced helicopter manufacturing technology, including the latest avionics and navigation systems, and does so with a capacity nearly 20 per cent larger than the fleet it will replace. I am pleased to note that the GFS is the launch customer for this brand-new model and configuration. I am pleased as well that it is the result of an East-West cooperation. While Airbus Helicopters has been responsible for much of the production, Mainland China has contributed the airframe manufacturing.

The new fleet's cost at 143.9 million euros is a pretty penny, to be sure. But, of course, I know we are getting fair value – for the hardware, the software, the training and the reassurance that we are investing in the best life-saving transport we can buy for our community, for the people of Hong Kong and for everyone around us.

For that, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you all, and wish you all a very pleasant day.

Thank you very much.