

Speech by CE at Youth Development Summit (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at the Youth Development Summit today (August 10):

Honourable Director Zheng Yanxiong (Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)), Commissioner Cui Jianchun (the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the HKSAR), government officials from around the world, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys,

Good morning everyone! A very warm welcome to you all to our first ever Youth Development Summit by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. First, my thanks to each and every one of you for being here, making this inaugural Summit a successful reality.

I am especially pleased that we are joined by high-level representatives from the Mainland, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Laos today. And we are here with an impressive group of some 1 000 young leaders, innovators, and change-makers from Hong Kong, the Mainland, and other parts of the world.

As Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, I have had the privilege of visiting different cities in the Mainland, Asia and the Middle East, and been showered with the hospitality of your places. So I am only too delighted to have this chance, to welcome you to my home, Hong Kong.

Your participation in this Summit underscores the importance of youth development, not just here in Hong Kong, but also in different places along the Belt and Road, and around the world.

And Hong Kong is a great place to unleash youthful vigour, talent and the pursuit of excellence, for this Youth Development Summit, and beyond.

Young people are our greatest asset. The Hong Kong SAR Government attaches great importance to youth development and released the first Youth Development Blueprint for Hong Kong. This holistic document highlights our vision, and concrete steps, for youth development.

Young people are the future pillars of our society. Our vision is to foster a new generation of youth equipped with a global perspective, aspiring and positive mindset, and affection for our country and city. We strive to provide our youth with a nurturing environment and hope for the future.

To achieve that, we adopt four policy directions: "exploration", "hope", "empowerment", and "contribution". And we certainly provide all these for our

young people.

We have a diverse and holistic education system – no one is left behind for lack of means. Five of our universities are ranked among the world's top 100, and our universities are home to some of the world's top schools in a wide range of subject areas. At the same time, we are enhancing the status of vocational and professional education and training. Our institutions help to nurture our multi-lingual and versatile young people.

We strive to build an international hub for post-secondary education for all. We welcome students from around the world to study in Hong Kong, and we offer pathways for home-grown students to study in the Mainland and overseas. We endeavour to expand young people's horizons, and develop their global outlook.

That, in turn, fuels our development as an international hub for high-calibre talent. We have made remarkable achievements on this front, I'm pleased to add. Since the end of 2022, the Government has launched a range of enhanced talent admission schemes, to welcome talent from around the world. Over the past 19 months or so, we have attracted more than 340 000 applications from professionals and young graduates, and already approved over 210 000 of them. More than 140 000 successful applicants have already arrived in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong enjoys unparalleled connectivity with both the Mainland and the world. With the unwavering support from national strategies, Hong Kong is fast-developing its competitiveness in eight areas under the National 14th Five-Year Plan, namely finance, trade, shipping, aviation, legal and dispute resolution services, intellectual property trading, cultural exchange, and innovation and technology.

Along with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development, and the Belt and Road Initiative, Hong Kong is well-placed in connecting the Mainland with both traditional and emerging markets around the globe, and to connect a world of investors to the Chinese market. The development potential of Hong Kong, and every young person who joins us here, is unlimited. We have been encouraging young people to capitalise on these opportunities, and become more involved in actively contributing to the overall development of our country.

Ladies and gentlemen, girls and boys, the theme of this Summit is "Set Sail for New Horizons". Working together, I am confident that we can embark on a new journey for youth development in Hong Kong, and with our partners from the Mainland and overseas.

Setting sail with you will be our host of distinguished speakers. They include young entrepreneurs, I&T professionals, as well as experts in creative industries, professional services and more. They have all demonstrated exceptional enthusiasm, dedication and determination to excel in their fields of expertise. I thank all our speakers for contributing their time, effort and ideas to this event.

I know that you can all draw great inspiration from our speakers, and from this event. On the topic of inspirational events, I am sure that like me, you have been closely following the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, which will come to an end tomorrow.

The people of Hong Kong and I take great pride in the outstanding performance of our young athletes. They have made historic progress this year by winning two gold medals and two bronze medals for Hong Kong so far. But more than medals, each athlete has demonstrated great determination, unwavering efforts, energetic passion and strong team spirit, all valuable attributes of the Hong Kong spirit. The unyielding professionalism and sportsmanship shown by every one of them have made us proud.

While we can't all be Olympic champions, we can all be champions of our own stories. We can all live in the spirit of the Olympic motto – "Faster, Higher, Stronger – Together" in our pursuits. And I believe that Hong Kong is a great place to make that happen. Because this is where you can all live the Hong Kong spirit – the spirit of never giving up, the spirit of always striving to achieve our best.

To our young people here today, do believe in yourselves, trust your instincts, and keep excelling yourselves. The future is in your hands! Your own hands! I encourage you to take full advantage of this Youth Development Summit to listen to, and learn from, our speakers and experts. Grasp the chance to network and build contacts and connections with your peers, and share your ideas and visions for the future.

And for our friends from the Mainland and overseas, take the opportunity to appreciate the beauty of Hong Kong, and to discover the charm of Hong Kong, an international metropolis that perfectly blends the East and the West.

Once again, thank you all for contributing your time, energy and ideas to this inaugural Youth Development Summit. I wish this Summit a great success, and our young people a bright future in Hong Kong and beyond.

Thank you.

