Speech by CS at International Engineering Alliance Meetings 2019 opening ceremony (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at the International Engineering Alliance (IEA) Meetings 2019 opening ceremony today (June 10):

Ir Ringo Yu (President of the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers), Ir Dr Philco Wong (Chairman of the IEA Meetings 2019 Organising Committee), Professor David Holger (Chair of the Governing Group of the IEA), Mr Damien Owens (Deputy Chair of the Governing Group of the IEA), distinguished delegates, guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is my great pleasure to join you all at the opening ceremony of the International Engineering Alliance Meetings 2019.

I would like first to express my warmest congratulations and appreciation to the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers for bringing this prestigious meeting back to Hong Kong. The International Engineering Alliance Meetings aim to improve engineering education and competence globally, upkeep the standards of professional engineers and engineering technologists practised around the world and dismantle the borders of engineering professionals of different places, thereby enhancing mobility of engineering professionals and ensuring a high standard of professional practice.

Engineers in Hong Kong have contributed greatly to Hong Kong's phenomenal development over the years. Using innovation, creativity, a wealth of knowledge and expertise, they have been instrumental in transforming our city from a tiny fishing village to one of the world's most dynamic cities, with unrivalled connectivity with any place across the globe, advanced soft and hard infrastructure, as well as a pool of world-class talents to propel this international city forward.

This Asia's world city is constantly changing and engineers are those behind so much of this development, from developing better water supplies, municipal sewer systems, wastewater treatment plants to the design of buildings to protect us from natural hazards and from health care to rapid and dramatic changes in transportation systems to improve people's quality of life.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government sees government expenditure as an important investment in Hong Kong's future. Over the past 10 years, Government's capital works expenditure has grown from HK$45.3 billion (about US$6.5 billion) in 2009-10 to HK$78.6 billion (about

US$10 billion), up by a significant 74 per cent. This explains why Hong Kong's performance in infrastructure is always at the forefront of the international community. We are ranked second in the world for infrastructure competitiveness by the Global Competitiveness Report 2018 of the World Economic Forum based in Switzerland.

Government's annual capital works expenditure is expected to rise to over HK$100 billion (about US$12.5 billion) soon. A host of capital projects ranging from public housing developments, new town projects and a major hospital development plan to the third runway at the Hong Kong International Airport are in full swing.

We are seeking funding approval from the Legislative Council to commence studies on the phased reclamation for formation of artificial islands in central waters between Hong Kong Island and Lantau. The studies are one of the key initiatives of the Lantau Tomorrow Vision, which will be a mega development to sustain Hong Kong's continuous growth. It is estimated that the Kau Yi Chau artificial islands under the first phase of Lantau Tomorrow Vision development will be able to provide 150 000 to 260 000 housing units, 70 per cent of which will be public housing. The Kau Yi Chau artificial islands will also support the development of Hong Kong's third core business district providing some 200 000 diversified employment opportunities.

The HKSAR Government is equally committed to conserving rural Lantau, striking a balance between development and conservation. We are seeking funding approval for the establishment of a Lantau Conservation Fund of HK$1 billion to support projects that will contribute to the overall conservation of rural Lantau, raise community awareness and mobilise the community to put conservation into practice.

Land is the essential building block for the challenges faced by Hong Kong. In the spatial context of Hong Kong, Lantau commands an unparalleled strategic location with a comprehensive air, road and rail transport network connected to other cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, the Mainland and beyond while accessing the well-established core business area at Central speedily.

Creation of land for meeting housing and economic needs in Lantau will also allow a more balanced spatial distribution of population and jobs. The strategic transport facilities in support of the Lantau development can also help relieve existing transportation constraints in Northwest New Territories while enhancing connectivity between urban areas and the New Territories.

We are mindful that Lantau Tomorrow Vision is a mammoth and challenging project that will require enduring collaborative efforts of the entire community, including professional engineers, in the next 20 to 30 years. Engineers from different disciplines will play critical roles in the entire development process from planning, analysis, design, build and maintain the infrastructure stock. As in the past, we look to the continuous support from professional associations like the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers for nurturing engineering experts in sustaining Hong Kong's long-term

development. The International Engineering Alliance Meeting today is indeed a shining example.

Speaking of visibility, the opening of the Central – Wan Chai Bypass this year is an outstanding testimony to Hong Kong's first-rate infrastructure. The 4.5-kilometre bypass includes a 3.7-kilometre tunnel that connects the Rumsey Street Flyover in Central and the Island Eastern Corridor in North Point. The Bypass relieves significantly the long-standing traffic problem along the northern shore of Hong Kong island, reducing travel time between Central and North Point to only five minutes. An advanced ventilation system is installed in the tunnel to improve air quality and enhance safety of tunnel users by containing and discharging smoke inside the tunnel efficiently in case of fire. The latest effective air purification system is also set up to clean the air exhausted from the tunnel to a higher standard.

Last year marked the notable achievements of the engineering discipline in Hong Kong. The commissioning of the 26-kilometre High Speed Rail (Hong Kong Section) connects Hong Kong with Mainland China's 25 000-kilometre national high-speed rail network, linking us up, so far, with 44 Mainland stations without interchange at 200 kilometres per hour along the Hong Kong Section and up to 350 kilometres per hour on the Mainland Section.

The 55-kilometre Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge also commenced operation last year. It is the longest bridge-tunnel system and sea crossing in the world linking Hong Kong, Zhuhai and Macao. This one-of-a-kind sea crossing comprises 12-kilometre Hong Kong Link Road, 29.6-kilometre Main Bridge and approximately 13.4-kilometre Zhuhai Link Road. It substantially cuts the travel time between Hong Kong, Macao and Zhuhai, while further connecting Hong Kong to the Greater Bay Area and cities of Guangxi Province.

The Greater Bay Area is an enormous market with a population of 70 million, similar to that of the UK, and generates gross domestic product around US$1.6 trillion or the size of South Korea or Australia. As one of the most open and economically vibrant regions in China, the Greater Bay Area offers boundless opportunities to Hong Kong's world-class professional services including different disciplines of engineering services.

More importantly, the Greater Bay Area is an important support pillar for the mega strategic Belt and Road Initiative. Many countries along the Belt and Road corridors lack infrastructure such as railways, highways, wharfs, power grids, telecommunications networks and energy. Hong Kong's engineering professionals are well prepared for this development given that Hong Kong and Mainland China have signed six mutual recognition agreements including architects, structural engineers, planners, material surveyors, construction surveyors and industrial surveyors.

Hong Kong enterprises have established close relationships with their counterparts across the boundary. We are also a hub for foreign contractors looking for opportunities on Mainland China and other places through joint ventures, representative offices, as well as mergers and acquisitions. All these advantages help strengthen Hong Kong companies to bid for major

national and multinational projects and promote their professional service brands throughout the Greater Bay Area and along the Belt and Road corridors.

Ladies and gentlemen, in an advanced technological world, engineers play a critical and pivotal role in turning ideas into reality, developing solutions to big technical issues. The wide range of disciplines that fall under the engineering title means that the engineering portfolio knows no bound. We are thankful for the selfless devotion of our engineers in propelling this vibrant international city forward on all fronts over the years.

On this note, I would like to express my warmest appreciation to the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers for bringing this important meeting to Hong Kong, signifying their achievements in raising the status, standards and visibility of engineering professionals in the region. I wish this year's International Engineering Alliance Meetings every success and every one of you a rewarding and enjoyable day. Thank you.