

Speech by CS at Jockey Club Music Children Seed Programme Kick-Off Ceremony (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at Jockey Club Music Children Seed Programme Kick-Off Ceremony today (July 7):

I just follow the fine tradition of the chairlady and will start my speech in English first, and followed by Cantonese. I am really touched today for being invited to this very important occasion.

First of all, Monique (Founder and Artistic Director of the Music Children Foundation (MCF), Ms Monique Pong), Annike (Founder and Executive Director of the MCF, Ms Annike Pong) and Anthony of course from the Jockey Club (Deputy Chairman of Hong Kong Jockey Club, Mr Anthony Chow), without you we won't be able to gather here today.

I would like to pay warm tribute to the three ladies, particularly the two sisters. You started the whole movement five years ago. I first came to know you when the project was operated in run-down premises in Sham Shui Po. I was touched by your passion, generosity, commitment and selfless devotion to the underprivileged people in Hong Kong. It is really a moving story. I was in tears because you really changed the life of the disadvantaged kids living in cubicles in Sham Shui Po. It is a dream come true.

The programme has mushroomed over the last five years, multiplying effect from one to eight. And of course my enormous gratitude goes to the Jockey Club as always. I always love seeing Anthony. Every time I see him means more people will likely be benefited. So my warm tribute to the Jockey Club! This is a huge donation, but this is also a substantial investment for future generations. There is no better investment than investing in our own children, particularly in their future, in their qualities, in their soft skills. In fact you are changing the lives of many, many Hong Kong children.

Monique told me that you've got the first batch of your trainees now, becoming scholars, and also coming back to help the younger kids. So this is what we call by giving back to the community. This is a very good story of reinvesting in the whole community and then helping the whole new generation of Hong Kong. They are the future of society.

The Government also attaches great importance to the well-being of our children. The current term government has just celebrated the first year of our anniversary. Generally, I think we are still

kicking our life of course. In the first year, we decided to place the well-being of the underprivileged very high on the policy agenda, particularly the upward mobility of children and young people. So I have been tasked to chair, first of all, a Youth Development Commission, targeting the cohort of 18 to 35 years of age. I have also taken up the very difficult task of chairing the Children's Commission, from age 0 to 18. So, we call it a continuum of caring, a through-train service, under the Chief Secretary for Administration, called Matthew Cheung.

And this underlines our important attachment to the upbringing, the qualities of our next generation in Hong Kong – upward mobility, their qualities. Music in fact is a very important, I would say, propeller for them to move forward. Look at the kids just now- their performance, their confidence, their facial expressions and also their co-operation, their team work. The Music Children Foundation indeed a symphony of passion, love, generosity, collaboration and, finally, selfless devotion for the love of Hong Kong. I must thank a lot of supporters, like Dr Lo (Chairman of Lo Ying Shek Chi Wai Foundation, Dr Lo Ka-shui), from day one; the Hong Kong Jockey Club, which very kindly donated \$45 million, enough for three years. Their target is to train up 4 100 young children who can stand here, sing, play instruments, without paying a single cent, not a single dollar. Even if they can't afford instruments, no problem, instruments provided, all free, provided that you really practice it and do it.

I was in tears when I watched that video – a young kid who loves saxophone living in a cubicle in Sham Shui Po. How can you practice in a cubicle with 10 families living on the same floor or up on the rooftop surrounded by all washings and TV antennas, and start practicing early in the morning? This is about persistence, professionalism, commitment and determination for upward mobility, right? It also changes the whole character of young people.

So, on that note I would simply say I come here with a heart of gratitude. To say thank you very much indeed for helping me in my task of enhancing the well-being of the next generation. Allow me to say a few words in Cantonese now.

