

Speech by CS at the 20th Anniversary Gala Dinner of Make-A-Wish Hong Kong (English only)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at the 20th Anniversary Gala Dinner of Make-A-Wish Hong Kong today (August 19):

Kevin (Chairperson of Make-A-Wish Hong Kong, Dr Kevin Lau), Colleen (Chairperson of Gala Dinner Committee, Make-A-Wish Hong Kong, Ms Colleen Yu), Ms Song (Deputy Director-General Coordination Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Ms Song Wei), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. I am delighted to join you all at this gala dinner to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Make-A-Wish Hong Kong.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my warmest gratitude to Make-A-Wish Hong Kong for their generous and kind-hearted support for children in need over the past 20 years.

Indeed, since its establishment in 1998, Make-A-Wish Hong Kong has helped fulfil the wishes of nearly 2 000 children with critical illness aged between 3 and 17 in Hong Kong and Macao. This meaningful wish-granting campaign aims to bring hope, strength and joy to these children and their families during their most difficult time by making their wish come true. We should all lend our full support to this loving and charitable cause.

Building a caring and compassionate society in Hong Kong is one of the key policy objectives of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. To this end, we are committed to providing sufficient resources to improve people's livelihood. In 2018-19, the Government's recurrent expenditure in social welfare, education and healthcare amounts to over \$230 billion, representing about 60 per cent of total public expenditure.

Nonetheless, Government's efforts alone are not enough. We need to work with civic-spirited and kind-hearted NGO partners like Make-A-Wish Hong Kong. We are vigorously promoting community-business-government tripartite collaboration to leverage Hong Kong's abundant social capital by pooling ideas and efforts from all quarters of the community.

In promoting this tripartite collaboration, the Government is determined to be a "facilitator" by introducing various programmes to join hands with different sectors to help disadvantaged groups fulfil their "wishes" through various means. We have set up the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged to provide matching grants for donation from businesses to support a wide range

of social service projects. So far, more than a million people in need have benefitted from this Fund. With a further injection of \$400 million from the Government this year, the fund will attract more enterprises and welfare organisations to join our league and benefit more people in need.

Such tripartite collaboration also enhances co-operation across generations, societal strata and sectors. A case in point is the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund. Among the projects funded, over 130 target at strengthening children's bonds with the community. For example, a project in Tin Shui Wai has introduced a community-family-school collaboration project to open up school premises to provide after-school child care services by recruiting and training voluntary workers from different sectors including parents to become tutors for children living in the district.

In addition, we have set up the Child Development Fund to promote tripartite, cross-sector collaboration among the Government, the community, families and the business sector. It aims to support longer-term development of children from a disadvantaged background with a view to alleviating inter-generational poverty. The Fund supports projects that seek to encourage children to plan for their future, develop a savings habit, and build up intangible assets such as positive attitudes, personal resilience and social networks which are all useful attributes for their future development.

This year, the Government has made an additional injection of \$300 million into the Fund to sustain its operation in the long term. However, the key to the continuous success of this programme lies with the pool of mentors who are willing to spend time to guide our young participants. Being a Life Guide, a mentor is expected to widen the participant's horizons, offer career inspirations, assist in building up self-esteem and resilience, as well as providing guidance and companionship as part of the personal development experience. Please allow me to make an appeal to you all and sign up to be a mentor of this meaningful programme and help guide our children to a brighter and promising future.

On this note, I wish the Make-A-Wish Hong Kong continuous success and every one of you an enjoyable and memorable evening. Thank you.