

Speech by CS at Third Edition of Women Power Forum (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, at the Third Edition of Women Power Forum today (June 30):

The Honourable Vice Chairman C Y Leung (Vice Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and Honorary Advisor of Women Power Forum), Secretary Huang Xiaowei (Secretary of the Leading Party Members' Group, Vice-President and First Member of the Secretariat of the All-China Women's Federation, and Vice-Chairperson of the National Working Committee on Children and Women under the State Council), Deputy Director Lu Xinning (Deputy Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), Your Excellency Mariam Mwinyi (First Lady of the 8th President of Zanzibar), Pansy (Chairperson of the Hong Kong Federation of Women and Chairperson of Women Power Forum, Ms Pansy Ho), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to be here today for the third Women Power Forum.

My thanks to the organisers, the Hong Kong Federation of Women and the Golden Bauhinia Women Entrepreneur Association, for giving me this welcome opportunity to speak to you, and to update and assure you that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government is committed to gender equality in Hong Kong.

We are working to create an enabling environment for women in our economy and our community, in every sector of our society.

In his first Policy Address delivered last October, the Chief Executive announced that a Women Empowerment Fund would be established to help women balance work and family commitments.

Then, in his Budget speech given in February this year, the Financial Secretary set aside HK\$100 million to promote women's development. With this provision, the Women Empowerment Fund was launched earlier this month. It aims to support community projects that inspire and empower women, whatever their age, occupation or background.

Apart from this funding measure, substantial progress has been made – and will continue to be made – to foster gender equality in Hong Kong.

Indeed, we have come a long good way since 1996, when the Sex Discrimination Ordinance came into operation and the Equal Opportunities Commission was created. The Ordinance, overseen by the Commission, prohibits

sexual harassment and discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status or pregnancy.

And the anti-discrimination law continues to be enhanced to address challenges faced by women. For instance, the law has been amended to prohibit direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of breast-feeding. It has also been amended to extend protection from sexual harassment to those working in a common workplace.

Other meaningful changes are taking place in the workplace. For instance, in 2018, we raised the gender benchmark for appointment to government advisory and statutory bodies from 25 per cent to 35 per cent.

In 2019, we introduced a five-day paternity leave for fathers to spend with their loved ones having a newborn; and in 2020, we extended maternity leave from 10 weeks to 14 weeks. Over the years, childcare services in the community have been strengthened.

It is the scope of all these changes, in my view, that has made Hong Kong one of the world's best-performing cities in achieving gender parity. In the United Nations' latest "Human Development Report", Hong Kong women ranked fourth worldwide.

In the public and private sectors, there are many prominent female leaders to help build a better Hong Kong. Among them is the Chairperson of the Hong Kong Federation of Women, Ms Pansy Ho, who is hosting today's forum for us. Also, just a year ago, Mrs Regina Ip and Ms Carol Yip were respectively appointed as the Convener of the Non-official Members of the Executive Council and the Director of the Chief Executive's Office.

Twelve of our 18 Permanent Secretaries – the Government's highest civil-servant positions – are women. In the civil service, about 40 per cent of all directorate officers are women; and in the judiciary, more than one-third of our judges and judicial officers are women.

In education, women represent more than half of the students enrolled in our post-secondary institutions; and in business and management, traditionally male-dominated disciplines, close to 60 per cent of our university students are female.

With the ongoing commitment of the Hong Kong SAR Government, and of dedicated bodies like the Hong Kong Federation of Women and the Bauhinia Women Entrepreneur Association, I am confident that Hong Kong's future will be built on gender equality, and will flourish because of it – because of you, each and every one of you, as today's theme goes, "Making the Impossible Possible: Women Trailblazer".

Before I close, allow me to congratulate the Hong Kong Federation of Women. Just yesterday evening, the Federation celebrated its 30th anniversary. There is much to celebrate.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish today's forum every success, and every one of you the best of business, and health, in the coming year. Thank you very much.

