

Speech by CS at UNICEF HK 35th Anniversary Gala Dinner (English only) (with photo/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, at UNICEF HK 35th Anniversary Gala Dinner today (February 24):

Judy (Chairman of Hong Kong Committee for UNICEF, Ms Judy Chen), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It gives me great pleasure to join you all to celebrate the 35th anniversary of UNICEF Hong Kong. Today's gala dinner is a wonderful occasion for UNICEF Hong Kong to thank its sponsors and partners.

Children are our hope for the future. Their potential and talent are key to driving society to move forward. UNICEF works in over 190 countries and territories worldwide to support children in need. In our city, UNICEF Hong Kong has been joining with the Government to promote children's rights through a number of children- and youth-related programmes.

An example of such joint efforts is the "Say Yes To Breastfeeding" campaign initiated by UNICEF Hong Kong and supported by the Health Bureau and the Department of Health. Since its launch in 2015, the campaign has received positive responses from various sectors. It now covers close to 440 breastfeeding spaces for public access, as well as over 1 200 workplaces for working parents, offering greater convenience to breastfeeding mothers. These actions speak of UNICEF Hong Kong's efforts in caring for children.

The current-term Government continues to safeguard children's rights and well-being. I am leading a high-level Commission on Children, with members coming from government bureaux and departments, as well as relevant sectors of society. Our mission is to drive children-related policies and initiatives, with strategies and priorities set on children's development and advancement.

In particular, the Government takes children's right to protection, free from harm and abuse, very seriously, and our pro-children efforts are now focused on two key areas.

First, we are preparing for establishing a mandatory reporting mechanism for suspected child abuse cases, with a view to achieving early and effective intervention into such mishaps. Our aim is to introduce the bill into the Legislative Council in the first half of this year.

Second, we are conducting a holistic review on residential child care and related services to better care for children without parental care or children with urgent care needs. With the first-phase review completed last

year, we are following up a number of recommendations. They include providing additional frontline support staff, enhancing the manning ratio of child care services, and strengthening inspection and enforcement.

Meanwhile, the Government is equally determined to support pre-school children with special needs. The Government Budget, announced just two days ago, has allocated an annual recurrent expenditure of about \$174 million for offering comprehensive and timely assistance to pre-school children with different levels of special needs. Inter-disciplinary service teams under a school-based and integrated approach will be deployed to achieve optimum results.

Turning to long-term youth development plans, the Government launched a Youth Development Blueprint last December. It contains over 160 concrete actions and measures, seeking to nurture a young generation with an affection for the motherland and Hong Kong, and equip them with a global perspective, an aspiring mindset and positive thinking. I am glad to know that UNICEF Hong Kong, in line with our work, has been running children- and youth-related programmes to meet their different developmental needs.

Ladies and gentlemen, my congratulations, once again, to UNICEF Hong Kong on its 35 years of dedication and achievements. I look forward to joining with you all in supporting our next generation to realise their full potential, building a brighter future for Hong Kong, the motherland and the world.

On that note, I wish every one of you an enjoyable evening. Thank you.

