

Speech by CS at Youth Development Summit (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, at the Youth Development Summit today (August 10):

Your excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to join you all for this Youth Development Summit. Today, we are here not only to celebrate the remarkable achievements and milestones in youth development, but also to look to the future.

We look forward to the boundless opportunities, inspiring collaborations, and ground-breaking innovations, that lie ahead in Hong Kong and for Hong Kong – not just for our young home-grown talent, but also for those around the world who choose to partner with Hong Kong for a brighter future together.

I have great confidence in the future. My confidence is reinforced by the presence of you all here. We have with us today top government officials, business leaders and innovators from Hong Kong. We also have influential leaders from governments, enterprises and youth groups in Mainland China and around the world.

No doubt, this gathering showcases the importance of youth development as a global priority. I am delighted to share with you Hong Kong's vision and journey in the next couple of minutes.

Youth Development Blueprint

It is our firm belief that Hong Kong's progress and prosperity are linked to the well-being and success of its young people. As President Xi Jinping wrote in a letter last year to students of a local school, "I hope that you can integrate the pursuit of knowledge with exploration of the world, gain a profound understanding of global developments, and delve into the history, culture and realities of the motherland."

President Xi's words echo our Government's vision for nurturing a new generation of young people with an affection for our country and Hong Kong, and equipped with a global perspective, an aspiring mindset and positive thinking.

In December 2022, our Government published the Youth Development Blueprint. This comprehensive document outlines the guiding principles of our long-term youth development work. It also serves as a guide to pull together all sectors of society in offering diverse support for young people.

Naturally, the needs and challenges are different from one person to another, and they change over time. With this in mind, the Blueprint contains more than 160 measures to provide all-round support for young people aged between 12 and 39; and to respond to their changing needs in a timely manner, we introduced nearly 60 new youth-related measures last year.

Taking a holistic approach to youth development, we have grouped all our measures under four directions, namely "exploration", "hope", "empowerment" and "contribution". Allow me to expand on each of these directions.

Exploration

First, "exploration". Encouraging young people to explore in the classroom, and beyond, is a crucial first step towards acquiring knowledge and skills to move forward.

This begins with instilling in young people a strong sense of national identity. We promote national education to ensure they have a good understanding of our country's history and latest developments. We also immerse them in the rich heritage and beauty of Chinese culture.

As the Chief Secretary for Administration, I am leading a Working Group on Patriotic Education. Established in April this year, the Working Group offers constructive advice on the work of the Government and non-governmental organisations in strengthening patriotic education on various fronts, which range from schools to the community at large.

A good example of such collaborative efforts is the first-edition Chinese Culture Festival, jointly presented by our Government and many arts and cultural organisations. From June this year until September, the Festival offers nearly 100 cultural and creative events, including performing arts programmes, film screenings, exhibitions and talks, for people of all ages to enjoy.

No less important, school education is key. By offering free, quality education, as well as support for families in need, our Government aims to ensure no child is denied the opportunity to explore and achieve their full potential.

We have been offering diversified education pathways to young people. For one thing, Hong Kong is the only city in Asia with five universities ranked in the world's top 100. We not only nurture home-grown talent, but also attract top students from around the world to study here.

We have also been strengthening vocational and professional education and training. Our efforts include setting up universities of applied sciences, with the Hong Kong Metropolitan University being the first institution to fulfill the relevant criteria earlier this year.

At the same time, we have been offering and funding various exchange and internship programmes designed for young people, so that they can gain a better understanding of our country and take a more global outlook. In the current financial year, we expect to offer a total of more than 200 000 exchange and internship places, covering different cities in Mainland China and overseas.

Hope

Our second policy direction is "hope". With hope and confidence, the future is filled with boundless opportunities, especially the possibilities presented by our motherland's high-quality economic development.

Thanks to the "one country, two systems" principle, Hong Kong is uniquely placed as the only world-class city that enjoys both the China advantage and the global advantage. We are fully engaged in national development strategies, including the National 14th Five-Year Plan, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development, and the Belt and Road Initiative. Such strategies provide ample opportunities for young people to develop, to grow and to thrive, while contributing to our motherland's development at the same time.

In particular, we support young people in pursuing their aspirations in Hong Kong's development of eight centres as outlined in the National 14th Five-Year Plan. The eight centres cover international finance, transportation, trade, and legal and dispute resolution services, as well as aviation, innovation and technology, intellectual property trading, and international cultural exchange.

We also actively encourage youth innovation and entrepreneurship within the Greater Bay Area. Last year, we established the Alliance of Hong Kong Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the Greater Bay Area. It leverages the resources and networks of nearly 60 partner organisations to empower the young generation of business leaders.

To reinforce our commitment, we provide start-up capital, entrepreneurial support and incubation services for promising young entrepreneurs to explore and grasp business opportunities in the Greater Bay Area. So far, we have supported close to 220 youth start-up teams. Their businesses are wide-ranging, covering retail, healthcare, education, brand design, innovation and technology, and much more. Besides starting businesses in Hong Kong, many of the start-up teams have expanded their reach to Mainland cities like Shenzhen, Guangzhou and Zhuhai.

On the housing front, we recognise the strong hopes of many young adults to have their own living spaces. In addition to speeding up housing supply, we have been running the Youth Hostel Scheme. To date, six youth hostels have been launched to provide a total of close to 3 000 hostel places.

Empowerment

Our third policy direction is "empowerment". Apart from academic and career pursuits, we are committed to fostering young people's physical and mental well-being, empowering them to embrace life's challenges.

We have been providing funding support for adventure training and positive thinking-related activities since last year, so that young people can improve their resilience, sense of discipline and team spirit. By mid-2025, we expect at least 16 000 young people will have joined such funded activities.

At the same time, mental health support for young people is a top priority. We have strengthened our medical-education-social collaboration model. Professional multi-disciplinary teams have been established to help promptly identify students with mental health needs, such that timely support services can be provided for them.

Contribution

Our fourth, and final, policy direction is "contribution", which means providing more channels for young people to participate in community-building and actively contribute to society.

Our Government has expanded the Member Self-recommendation Scheme for Youth, so that more young people can take part in government advisory committees through self-nomination. To date, 85 government advisory committees have joined the Scheme, covering trade and industry, innovation and technology, human resources planning, child affairs, and much more. The overall youth participation rate is encouraging. It doubled from some eight per cent at the launch of the scheme, in end-2017, to some 16 per cent by the end of last year.

Also, our Government has established two new youth-related committees in each of Hong Kong's 18 districts, namely the District Youth Community Building Committee, and the District Youth Development and Civic Education Committee. We aim to enable young people, who can be as young as 16 years of age, to participate in community-building and district affairs. About 330 young people have been appointed to these committees.

No less important, we are committed to engaging with the youth community. Last year, we established a brand-new "Youth Link", which is a platform for the Government to network with young people and provide them with more opportunities to develop talents and serve the community. We have recruited over 10 000 members so far, and we will continue to attract more young people to join.

Closing

Ladies and gentlemen, to witness in action the four principles I have just mentioned, let's look at our amazing Hong Kong, China team, including many young talented players like gold medal-winning fencers Cheung Ka-long and Vivian Kong, at the Paris Olympics:

- each and every one of our athletes has seized the opportunity to "explore" far beyond their comfort zone;
- they have thrived on the "hope" of competing on the world stage;
- they have been "empowered" by mental and physical strength to overcome challenges along the way; and
- they have "contributed" to the betterment of society with their excellent performance, strong determination, and remarkable resilience, that inspire us all.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure we all have a shared commitment to driving the healthy and holistic development of youth. Our efforts are not just about policies and programmes. We need to build a future where all young people, just like our athletes, can unleash their full potential.

The energy, creativity, and resilience, of young people are the forces that will, in turn, shape a brighter future for society.

Today's Summit is a call to action. I am confident that the exchanges here today will lead to fruitful outcomes, innovative solutions and collaborative efforts for the benefit of youth development locally, regionally, and globally.

On that note, I wish this Youth Development Summit a great success, and all our visitors a pleasant stay here in Asia's world city. Thank you very much.

