

Speech by DCS at East Asia Five Plus (EA5+) Leaders' Forum 2023 Opening Ceremony and Hong Kong Red Cross 73rd Anniversary Celebration (English only)

Following is the speech by the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Cheuk Wing-hing, at the East Asia Five Plus (EA5+) Leaders' Forum 2023 Opening Ceremony and Hong Kong Red Cross 73rd Anniversary Celebration today (July 12):

Mr Wang Ke (Executive Vice President of the Red Cross Society of China), Mr Chen Zetao (Deputy Director-General of the Co-ordination Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), leaders of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, leaders of the International Committee of the Red Cross, leaders of the East Asia National Red Cross Societies, youth representatives, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is my honour and privilege to officiate at the East Asia Five Plus (EA5+) Leaders' Forum 2023 Opening Ceremony and the Hong Kong Red Cross 73rd Anniversary Celebration.

The holding of this important annual Leaders' Forum in Hong Kong is a vote of confidence in Hong Kong and a shining testimony to the fact that Hong Kong is back to the centre stage of international events.

As a profound international movement, the Red Cross, through its global humanitarian network, offers humanitarian assistance in more than 190 countries, playing an unparalleled role in bringing help and hope to the world's most vulnerable people; offering humanitarian assistance regardless of nationality, race, belief or class. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government salutes the contributions and unique role of the Red Cross to world humanitarianism.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we were fortunate to have the Hong Kong Red Cross joining forces with the HKSAR Government by way of supporting an emergency response, providing psychological support and aiding in community recovery.

The staff and volunteers of the Hong Kong Red Cross have supported the Government unfailingly in many ways, including running community testing centres, operating a hotline centre, providing daily necessities for the Government's quarantine centres, and supporting the emergency medicine dispatch for people under home quarantine. On behalf of the HKSAR Government, I would like to express our gratitude to them for their dedication under the leadership of the Hong Kong Red Cross Council.

Today and tomorrow, the Leaders' Forum will explore topics on large-scale disaster preparedness, youth engagement, first aid training, mental health and psychological support, climate change, and the auxiliary role to the Government on humanitarian work. All these topics are central to the refinement and development of Red Cross programmes in the respective areas of the leaders. I wish you all a very successful forum with inspiring, fruitful exchanges.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Hong Kong Red Cross on its 73rd anniversary. The Hong Kong Red Cross is an important partner of the HKSAR Government and has done splendidly well in serving the community of Hong Kong. We look forward to your continued contributions to maintaining Hong Kong as a safe, healthy and resilient city.

Thank you very much.

