

Speech by DCS at Save the Children Hong Kong's 15th Anniversary Dinner (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Deputy Secretary for Administration, Mr Cheuk Wing-hing, at Save the Children Hong Kong's 15th Anniversary Dinner tonight (October 25):

Paul (Chairman, Save the Children Hong Kong, Mr Paul Kennedy), Donnie (the Ambassador of Save the Children Hong Kong, Mr Donnie Yen), Cissy (spouse of Mr Donnie Yen, Ms Cissy Wang), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It is my great pleasure to join you all to celebrate the 15th anniversary of Save the Children Hong Kong.

First, I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to Save the Children for its sustained efforts and unwavering dedication in working with children, schools, families and different stakeholders to deliver lasting change for children in Hong Kong and around the world. I am truly impressed that, just last year alone, programmes of Save the Children have benefited over 26 000 Hong Kong children and adults. Save the Children's vision is a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation. This meaningful and noble cause deserves the wholehearted support of all.

The Government attaches great importance to protecting the best interests of children and firmly believes that every child has a right to protection against harm and abuse. In this regard, the Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse Ordinance was passed in July this year, requiring professionals in the social welfare, education and healthcare sectors to report serious child abuse case starting from January 20, 2026. During the 18-month transitional period, the Government will focus on preparing for its implementation, ensuring that the various support measures are properly put in place. The new legislation is an important milestone in child protection, as it would create a wide protection web for children and send a strong deterrent to potential perpetrators that their abuse will be easily exposed.

One way to prevent child abuse is to strengthen positive parenting. I am glad to see that Save the Children has been organising the Heart-to-Heart Parent-Child Programme which promotes positive parenting and strengthens parent-child relationships, with 500 children and parents benefitting from the Programme. On the part of the Government, the 2024 Policy Address has just announced that a pilot scheme will be launched to set up four Community Parents and Children Centres, which will commence service from 2026, to promote parent-child interaction and pass on positive parenting skills to parents through play-based services. The Centres will also support the cognitive, language, social and emotional developmental needs of children and refer families or children in need to various government and community

services as appropriate.

To promote children's mental health, the Government has implemented various measures, including extending and enhancing the Three-Tier School-based Emergency Mechanism in all secondary schools; launching the "Mental Health Literacy" resource packages for senior secondary and lower primary students; strengthening teachers' capacity to early identify and support students with mental health needs; and helping parents acquire the knowledge and skills to better safeguard their children's mental health. I am pleased that Save the Children shares the same vision with the Government, in providing various mental wellness programmes, such as the "Play to Thrive Programme" and the Integrating Social and Emotional Learning into Schools project. I trust Save the Children will continue to work hand in hand with the Government and different sectors of society to strive for children's healthy growth and development.

I sincerely hope that everyone in this room will continue to lend their support to children's issues by actively building cross-sector partnerships. These collaborations are essential for creating a more impactful and sustainable approach to address the challenges faced by children in our community. Together, we can "nurture hearts and strengthen minds" of our children, providing an environment where they feel supported and empowered.

Once again, my congratulations and gratitude to Save the Children for its 15 years of commitment and achievements. I wish Save the Children continuous success and every one of you a wonderful evening.

