

Speech by SCMA at Eid Celebration Luncheon of International Islamic Society (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip, at the Eid Celebration Luncheon of International Islamic Society today (October 6):

Mr Mohammed Bazlul Quader Helal (President of International Islamic Society), Distinguished Members of the Governing Board of the International Islamic Society, Consuls-General, Ricky (Chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission, Mr Ricky Chu), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It gives me great pleasure to join you all today on the annual Eid Celebration. It is the first time that I join you on the occasion of celebrating an important Muslim holiday, the Feast of Fast-Breaking.

Hong Kong is a cosmopolitan city where people of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds thrive and flourish. The invaluable contribution of the 300 000 Muslims in Hong Kong has helped shape Hong Kong's society in no small measure, and for this contribution we are most grateful.

The Government is committed to building an inclusive society, bringing together people from different backgrounds to live and work here. Equal opportunities for people of diverse races and elimination of racial discrimination is the key to this. We have been adopting various measures with a view to achieving this goal:

(a) Setting up a high-level Steering Committee on Ethnic Minorities Affairs under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary for Administration in July 2018. This is to ensure that concerted effort by all government bureaux and departments will be channelled for the advancement of this cause. In fact, when I worked to the then Chief Secretary for Administration, who is the present Chief Executive, in late 2013, I had helped put together a package of measures covering education, employment, training and community integration in the 2014 Policy Address with an additional annual financial implication of \$200 million. Since then, a number of measures have been implemented and we need to review their effectiveness and explore ways to enhance the support.

(b) My bureau, the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, introduced a bill to the Legislative Council last year. It seeks to take forward eight of the recommendations arising from the Equal Opportunities Commission's Discrimination Law Review. Six such recommendations are related to the Race Discrimination Ordinance, with an aim to enhancing legal protection for ethnic minorities.

(c) We are also working hard to improve the Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality, so that all government bureaux and departments,

as well as related organisations providing services to ethnic minorities, could adopt the Guidelines and make the service they provide more user-friendly and targeted for the benefit of the ethnic minorities.

(d) My bureau has provided the Equal Opportunities Commission with an additional funding of \$6 million covering a three-year period starting from 2019-2020. The additional funding is for public education and support for better integration of ethnic minorities through publicity and educational programmes, including weekly radio programmes, newspaper and MTRC advertisements, roving exhibitions and school events.

Government effort aside, I call on all sectors of the community to work together to build a harmonious and inclusive society. I would like to express my special appreciation of the contribution of the International Islamic Society in serving Muslims in Hong Kong. I am particularly impressed by one of the Society's missions, i.e. "encouraging dialogue between various cultural, spiritual, ethical and belief traditions to find a common ground where compassion can be restored and collaborative action can be initiated".

Ladies and gentlemen, at this difficult time of Hong Kong, in addition to stopping violence through law enforcement efforts, frank dialogue is indeed the way to find a common ground where we collaborate to restore peace, find solutions and rebuild our home. We have met face to face thousands of Hong Kong people, from all walks of life, spanning the whole political spectrum, in hundreds of sessions since June this year. We held the first town-hall meeting on September 26. The Chief Executive spoke to 150 Hong Kong residents, who were randomly selected from a pool of more than 20 000 residents indicating interest to join the meeting. We will continue the dialogue.

With the joint efforts of all quarters of the society, including our 300 000 Islamic community, I am confident that this little lovely city will bounce back from the difficulties and has a brighter future.

May I wish the International Islamic Society every success! Wishing you all happiness and good health! Thank you very much.