Speech by Secretary for Health at Our Hong Kong Foundation and Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation Joint BioTech Research Report Launch: “Developing Hong Kong into Asia’s Leading Clinical Innovation Hub” (English only) (with photo)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, at Our Hong Kong Foundation and Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation Joint BioTech Research Report Launch: "Developing Hong Kong into Asia's Leading Clinical Innovation Hub" today (November 30):

Dr Silas Yang (Governor of Our Hong Kong Foundation), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I am most delighted to stand before you today as the Secretary for Health to give remarks at the launch of the insightful research report "Developing Hong Kong into Asia’s Leading Clinical Innovation Hub", which was jointly conducted by Our Hong Kong Foundation (OHKF) and the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTP). I would like to extend my warmest welcome to all in attendance today, and express my deepest gratitude to OHKF and the HKSTP for spearheading this pioneering study.

The launch of the study today comes at a perfect time as our community and the world are now entering the post-COVID pandemic stage and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government is determined to seize the opportunity to develop Hong Kong into a health and medical innovation hub. In this year's Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced that various initiatives will be implemented to develop Hong Kong into a health and medical innovation hub by leveraging Hong Kong's high-quality healthcare system, state-of-the-art research facilities and capabilities, and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) national strategy.

First of all, Hong Kong is planning to establish the Greater Bay Area International Clinical Trial Institute (GBAICTI) in the Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone to provide a one-stop clinical trial support platform for research institutions and stakeholders, and co-ordinate resources in the public and private healthcare sectors. More importantly, the Hetao Co-operation Zone provides the ideal strategic location for a Hong Kong-Shenzhen cross-boundary collaborative

clinical trial platform that complies with both national and international standards, combining the high-quality international clinical research experience of Hong Kong with the large-quantity clinical networks in Shenzhen and the GBA.

At the same time, our Hospital Authority (HA), that manages 43 public hospitals under a single clinical management computer system ideal for clinical trial networks and big data research, will establish the Cluster Clinical Research Support Office that aims to roll out different supportive measures to encourage, facilitate and expedite the process of clinical trials.

With the aim of bringing good medicine to Hong Kong ã€Œå¥½è—¥æ¸¯ç”¨ã€ and enhancing our biomedicine development ecosystem, we are also taking steps to enhance our drug regulatory regime towards the "primary evaluation" approach. The Government will establish a drug and medical device regulatory authority under the title of the Hong Kong Centre for Medical Products Regulation (CMPR). As the first step, we have launched the new "1+" mechanism since November 1, 2023, to expedite the approval of new drugs. In contrast to secondary evaluation that requires the approval of two reputable regulatory authorities or two CPPs (Certificates of Pharmaceutical Product), application for registration of new drugs used for life-threatening or severely-debilitating diseases may now rely on one CPP plus the submission of sufficient local clinical data for experts' approval. The new regime will provide a fast track for the registration and clinical use of new drugs to benefit needy patients not only in Hong Kong but in the GBA through the measure of using Hong Kong registered drugs and medical devices used in Hong Kong public hospitals in the GBA ã€Œæ¸¯æ¾³è—¥æ¢°é€šã€. It will also attract pharmaceutical and device industries to develop R&D (research and development) and have new medical products registered in Hong Kong.

In addition, with the support of the National Medical Products Administration, Hong Kong, China has been accepted as an observer of the International Council for Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH) with effect from October 31, 2023. Our mission is to serve as the centre of "bringing in" and "going global" for health and medical innovations that will benefit the GBA and contribute to the building of a "Healthy China" and to become an internationally recognised regulatory authority for medical products.

The initiatives call for concerted cross-sector collaboration and dialogue, and OHKF and the HKSTP are definitely our important partners in this subject area. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for the research report which shares the same visions that the Government has and sheds insightful light on how Hong Kong can leverage our strengths to elevate our standing as a regional powerhouse that propels health and medical innovation, bringing benefits to Hong Kong and the GBA as well as contributing to the building of a "Healthy China". This report systematically unveils policy, talent, operational and infrastructural constraints hindering Hong Kong's clinical research ascent through in-depth surveys and experts' interviews that involved over 250 stakeholders. Based on stakeholders'

feedback, it recommends action plans across five fronts that can help overcome our limitations and transform Hong Kong into a leading regional powerhouse and global influencer in the field of medical innovation. The recommendations echo the Government's initiatives and reinforce our society's confidence in scaling new heights in health and medical innovation.

In closing, I would like to quote from the important speech that President Xi Jinping delivered at the meeting celebrating the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to the motherland and the inaugural ceremony of the sixth-term Government of the HKSAR last year. President Xi said, "We must fully and faithfully implement the principle of 'one country, two systems'" and "Hong Kong should maintain its distinctive status and advantages."

Hong Kong's mission of developing into a health and medical innovation hub with a new policy of "primary evaluation" for medical products and establishment of a clinical trial platform in collaboration with Shenzhen and the GBA follows President Xi's direction to maintain our distinctive status and advantages in clinical research. It will create strong impetus for growth in biomedical innovation and translation as Hong Kong dovetails with the national strategies of the 14th Five-Year Plan and the GBA development to develop an international innovation and technology centre. It will address people's expectation to benefit from the most advanced biomedical technology and further enhance the healthcare standard in Hong Kong.

Finally, I would like to reiterate the Government's gratitude for this extensive research report, which sheds light on Hong Kong's health and medical innovation landscape and suggests pathways for seeking a breakthrough. It is of extremely high reference value. Thank you very much and may I wish you all excellent health.