

Speech by SLW at Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children “Joining Hands for Children’s Better Future” launch ceremony (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, at the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children (HKSPC) "Joining Hands for Children's Better Future" launch ceremony today (December 4):

Mr Robin Hammond (Chairman of the Executive Committee of the HKSPC), Mrs Susan Choy (Director of the HKSPC), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be here today, to celebrate the opening of the newly renovated Children's Residential Home operated by the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children.

Spanning over a period of eight years, this renovation has been a laborious project which could never have come to fruition without the hard work and dedication of everyone here at the HKSPC. On behalf of the children residents, I would like to salute all those involved and say a big thank you for a job well done.

For almost a century, the HKSPC has since 1926 worked tirelessly for the well-being of our needy children in Hong Kong, with a special focus on their early childhood development. As the forerunner and one of the most established organisations in this field, the HKSPC currently operates 27 service units which attend to the various needs of children – ranging from newborn babies to youngsters up to the age of 16. Their services also extend to their families as well, including single parents, low-income families, new arrival families and ethnic minority families. As of today, up to 3,000 children and their families are served by the HKSPC on a daily basis.

All of us know so well that our children are our future. Hence, ensuring that our children could blossom and flourish is our best investment. As our Chief Executive so rightly pointed out in her second Policy Address, children's growth and development are among our top priorities.

In June this year, the Government set up the Commission on Children. Spearheaded by the Chief Secretary for Administration, the Commission has wide cross-bureau and inter-departmental representations with experts and advocates from the community, and Susan is a member of the Commission. I am happy to report that work has already begun. Plans are in place to allocate additional resources, from 2019-20 onwards, for the implementation of necessary measures to safeguard the rights and well-being of children.

Among other things, we will also launch a pilot scheme in the 2018/19 school year to provide social work services to about 150,000 pre-primary children and their families. Five specialised co-parenting support centres will also be set up to provide necessary support to children from separated or divorced families.

That aside, in an effort to better integrate family-related policies, a policy study group will be established to explore the viability of how best to co-ordinate family-related policies – be they for children, women or the elderly – under the centralised purview of the Labour and Welfare Bureau.

Yes, the Government is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being and development of children. Nevertheless, we are also counting on the assistance from organisations like the HKSPC. We need caring people like you to chime in and build a harmonious society for all.

On this note, I would like to congratulate the HKSPC again for the completion of the renovation project, and wish the organisation all the best in the many more years to come. Thank you very much.