

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, and the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Caspar Tsui, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (September 7):

Reporter: Good morning. Firstly, what's your take on the Central Government's latest initiatives in Qianhai and Hengqin, and what measures will the SAR Government take to help Hong Kong people and industries seize and seek opportunities like Qianhai plan and other deepened collaboration between Hong Kong and Shenzhen? Second question, what impact do you expect from the oath-taking of district councillors having on their future work as civil servants and on local political atmosphere, and will this requirement be extended to other public services in the future? Thank you.

Chief Executive: First of all, about the question on the two important plans announced by the State Council, one concerns Qianhai, the other concerns Hengqin – let me just put it that way, Hong Kong prospers through very close collaboration with our Mainland parties, particularly in the Guangdong-HongKong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and within the Guangdong-HongKong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Hong Kong and Shenzhen are very, very close partners over several decades. In fact it would be no exaggeration to say that the huge success of Shenzhen in the past four decades has much to do with its proximity with Hong Kong, and a lot of investment and professionals going to Shenzhen to leverage Shenzhen's opening up and reforms in order to support Shenzhen's development. Since almost 10 years ago when Qianhai was given the status of a modern service hub working very closely with Hong Kong, Hong Kong companies as well as our professionals are playing a very important role in the Qianhai development. By now we have over 11 500 Hong Kong enterprises in Qianhai. There's a lot of investment from Hong Kong, there are youth entrepreneurship projects in Qianhai, and more recently, through special policies, Qianhai has opened up more professional services for Hong Kong people, whether it's in the construction, engineering, town planning, architecture, legal and other things. With this expansion of Qianhai from less than 15 square kilometres to over 120 sq km, it will of course give us a much, much greater hinterland that we will continue to provide our professional services in many years to come.

Just to give you a sense of the scale of this Qianhai enlarged area, 120 sq km is one and a half of the size of Hong Kong Island. If Hong Kong prospers with an international financial centre and all the commercial developments on both sides of Victoria Harbour, you could imagine how many opportunities it will bring to Hong Kong's various sectors and professionals, with a 120 sq km big Qianhai, which is going to be developed into a service hub. That is the opportunity for Hong Kong. And that's why back in May this year, in one of my meetings with the Party Secretary Mr Wang Weizhong (Secretary of the CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee), we have already decided

to set up a special task force on Qianhai to share information and to discuss more cooperation, and where needed, Hong Kong and Shenzhen will go respectively to the Central Government for more supportive measures and policies to be applicable in this Qianhai area.

As far as Hengqin is concerned, this new development of Guangdong and Macao, through a very deep collaboration mode of the Qianhai area, is to help diversify the economy of Macao. But I also see a lot of opportunities for Hong Kong because within this area, one is we now have the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge which enhances significantly connectivity between Hong Kong and Macao, Hong Kong and Qianhai; secondly is in the various sectors that this new collaboration area in Qianhai is going to develop, much could be given to Hong Kong's economy, for example in finances, they said that this area will also grow the bond market, for example in Chinese medicine development, we have a very strong Chinese medicine sector in Hong Kong and soon we'll have a Chinese medicine hospital in Hong Kong. Although I would say that the Hengqin plan is not as important to Hong Kong as the Qianhai plan, but it will also provide a lot of opportunities for Hong Kong. How will the Hong Kong SAR Government prepare our Hong Kong professionals and young people to take advantage of these two plans? One is by, as I've just mentioned, government-to-government collaboration, we try to provide more facilitating measures for our professionals, opening up and deepening reform for our professionals to go into these two areas; secondly is for ourselves to introduce some new initiatives, just like the Greater Bay Area Youth Employment Scheme, the GBAYES that we have introduced, which we now have over 750 Hong Kong young people working in the Greater Bay Area, over half of them are in Shenzhen. So I will make sure that my relevant bureaus and departments will continue to take to heart these Qianhai and Hengqin plans in their everyday life so that we will be able to give the necessary leadership and facilitation for our economic sectors and professionals to benefit from these two major national plans.

As far as oath-taking, oath-taking is a requirement under the new legislation that was passed by the Legislative Council in May this year. This is called the Public Offices (Candidacy and Taking Up Offices)(Miscellaneous Amendments) Ordinance 2021. For the first time that requires District Council members to take the oath in the same way as the Legislative Council members. This is also to fulfil Article 6 in the National Security Law which requires people going into public offices to take the oath. The oath requires the oath-takers to safeguard the Basic Law and also to be loyal, to swear allegiance to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. It is necessary for us to also extend this oath-taking to other important public office positions in Hong Kong. This is a subject which the Chief Secretary for Administration is now working on. You will remember that we have already extended this oath-taking to all the civil servants and the government employees and we will continue to work on that. Once we have finished with this oath-taking procedure then we will know ultimately how many District council members are left in the current term of the District Council which will last until the end of 2023. The obvious question to be answered is what will then happen to the operation of the District Councils, and this is something that the Secretary for Home Affairs will look into.

Basically our primary objectives, one is to ensure that District Councils fulfil their role as an advisory body as provided under Basic Law Article 97 and in local legislation; secondly is to ensure that through our network of District Offices and various departments, we will continue to look after the district interests and to provide the necessary services at the district level. All these normal government operations will not be undermined by the absence of some District Council members who could not fulfil the legal requirements that I have just mentioned, which they will have to demonstrate through the oath-taking process which will start later this week.

Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)