

Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, at a media session after attending a radio programme this morning (February 14):

Reporter: How effective do you think the overall e-cigarette ban will be when people can still be able to buy e-cigarette products online from other countries?

Secretary for Food and Health: For the legislative amendment this time, our intention, first of all, is to cut off the supply. Through the ban on import, manufacture, sale, distribution and promotion, the prohibition on these areas has already achieved our policy intention and objective of cutting the supply, so that it would not influence our younger generation. Often these new products are marketed attractively, so that these new products would attract a younger generation. The most important thing is to cut off the supply so that it would not further affect our next generation and our general public. Regarding whether we would ban the possession or use of these products, after the legislation has been enacted for a while, this should not be an issue because people would not be able to buy these products. Therefore, as time goes by, this worry would be less. But of course we would work together with the Police and the Customs to see if there are loopholes in the existing proposed legislation and see how best the way forward.

Reporter: Wouldn't it be more effective to just make vaping illegal?

Secretary for Food and Health: Our intention is not to criminalise e-cigarette or heat-not-burn cigarette users. Our main aim is to cut off the supply so that it won't affect further our next generation and the people in Hong Kong. Therefore, the current legislative framework would be the first step to stop these products from harming our people in Hong Kong.

Reporter: Some people said the penalty is too harsh, I mean the imprisonment and the fine. Why do you decide on such a penalty?

Secretary for Food and Health: First of all, after we have passed the law in the Legislative Council, we would have six months' (transitional period) before the law is commenced, so that people can adjust during this period, both for the trade and users. After the legislation is commenced, especially in the first few months after commencement, we would try our best to appeal to users or people not to bring in (alternative smoking products) from other countries or through import. We would try to facilitate those people, who are not aware of the legislation, to put these products in a drop box (upon arrival in Hong Kong) so that it would be more convenient and not to criminalise the users or people bringing in e-cigarettes.

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