

Transcript of remarks by SFH at media session

Following is the transcript of remarks made by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, at a media session at the Legislative Council Complex today (October 21):

Reporter: About the smoking bill, regulating traditional tobacco would be the next step after this bill? How would you help existing heated tobacco users to quit smoking? Second question, are you feeling that more tobacco smuggling cases will be found afterwards, which makes smoking behaviour even harder to trace? Thank you.

The Secretary for Food and Health: Thank you for your questions. First of all, the Government welcomes the passing of the bill. Passing of this bill is just the start of our many tobacco control work that we have been doing. Regarding further tightening or further strengthening tobacco control, and trying to reduce the smoking prevalence to 7.8 per cent as stated in our NCD (non-communicable diseases) action plan towards 2025 (Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Diseases in Hong Kong), there are a few types of work we will do after passing of the bill. One of which is what you have mentioned, about Tobacco Endgame. First of all, we will continue our tobacco control work through multi-pronged approach to cut the smoking prevalence and to achieve the 7.8 per cent smoking prevalence target.

Secondly, we will review our current tobacco control policy and focus our work on two aspects. One is to expand our non-smoking areas so that we can further protect people from exposure to second-hand smoke. Second is smoking cessation. We will try our very best to strengthen smoking cessation and also capitalise the newly developed or newly set up district health system, District Health Centre, or District Health Centre Express, in the community, so that smoking cessation can be done as efficient and also as convenient as possible. I have also asked COSH, the Hong Kong Council On Smoking and Health, to work closely with the District Health Centre, or District Health Centre Express, so that smoking cessation work can be further strengthened in the community.

Regarding the smoking cessation for the heated tobacco products, you know this is one of our focus, the Department of Health has been providing resources to a number of NGOs (non-government organisations), and also the Department of Health themselves, plus the Hospital Authority clinics. All have Smoking Cessation Clinics and smoking cessation counselling provided to smokers. I think in the coming while, we will also try our best to add the focus of not only helping people who are traditional cigarette smokers, but also smokers that has been taking heated tobacco products, or the dual smokers, that is taking heated tobacco products as well as traditional cigarettes. And finally, we will start our work on going Towards a Tobacco Endgame, as I think many legislators and the public would like to see a

smoke-free Hong Kong. In achieving a Tobacco Endgame, we would have set some targets, and timeline.

Actually many overseas countries have already had a timetable for Tobacco Endgame. So, we will review these situations and the target is to reduce the smoking prevalence to about 5 per cent, which is also the target that many other countries have been taking in the Tobacco Endgame. We would start working on it, and also assess the timeline that is needed for this Tobacco Endgame, that is about lowering the smoking prevalence to about 5 per cent. We will work on a timetable so that everybody is clear about our tobacco control strategy, our policy, as well as timetable. Finally, we will continue to review and work with other countries on their experiences and the global trends, so that we can focus on two areas, first is to prevent any new smoker from going into the smoking family; and second, to help those who are already smokers to quit smoking, so that we can achieve Tobacco Endgame, as well as a smoke-free Hong Kong in the near future. Thank you.

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