

Transcript of remarks of press conference on anti-epidemic measures (with photo/video)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, held a press conference on anti-epidemic measures this morning (March 21). Also joining were the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr John Lee, and the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan. Following is the transcript of remarks of the press conference:

Reporter: Hi, Mrs Lam. What you just laid out with the phased easing, it looks a lot like the roadmap that countries who are seeking to live with the virus have followed. Are you definitively decoupling from the Mainland and moving away from "COVID zero"? And once this outbreak comes more under control, will you still prioritise the reopening of the border with the Mainland over opening the international border? Thank you.

Chief Executive: As I have said in the concluding slide, what we have assessed and announced today is only a sort of stage report, and have tried to provide as much direction as possible to the businesses and people of Hong Kong. To really map out a longer-term roadmap not only in dealing with this particular wave but also a future wave, and not only in dealing with COVID-19 but perhaps another virus in future, we do need to do more monitoring of the epidemic development, including what the World Health Organization has to say about this pandemic. We have to listen more carefully to the experts, both locally and from the Mainland. Since we are also very concerned about the socio-economic development, we will widely consult various stakeholders in Hong Kong to come up with a more permanent pathway for Hong Kong to tackle any public health crisis in a more targeted manner that will, other than the overriding mission of protecting the safety and health of the Hong Kong people, be also be based on evidence. We should also take into account the impact on the social and economic development. Right now, I would advise that you need not draw any conclusion of what we are heading towards in the announcement that we have made today.

What is important is what the FS (Financial Secretary) has just said. We will always, as an international city and a very important business and aviation hub, have to take into account not only connectivity with the outside world but also connectivity with the Mainland. As the FS has rightly pointed out, many international businesses have chosen Hong Kong because of our accessibility to the Mainland market and also, of course, to the Asia Pacific region. For any longer-term public health strategy, we will have to take into account both factors, that is maintaining Hong Kong's accessibility to the Mainland and also ensuring her continued connectivity with the outside world. Thank you.

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

