

24th Plenary of Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation Joint Conference held in Guangzhou (with photos/videos)

The Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), Mr John Lee, leading the delegation of the HKSAR, met with the Secretary of the CPC Guangdong Provincial Committee, Mr Huang Kunming, and co-chaired the 24th Plenary of the Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation Joint Conference with the Governor of Guangdong Province, Mr Wang Weizhong, in Guangzhou today (July 12).

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) holds strategic importance in the country's new development pattern. During his inspection tour to Guangdong in April last year, President Xi Jinping stressed that "the GBA must be developed as a strategic fulcrum of the new development pattern, a demonstration zone of high-quality development, and a pioneer of Chinese modernisation", thereby setting the direction for taking forward the development of the GBA.

Mr Lee remarked, "Guangdong has all along been the most important partner of Hong Kong in regional co-operation with the Mainland. Hong Kong and Guangdong have a multi-disciplinary, in-depth and all-round co-operation relationship. In the past year, the communication and exchanges between the two sides have become closer, exchange visits at different levels have become more frequent, and fruitful progress in various policy measures to strengthen inter-connectivity in the GBA has been achieved. The HKSAR Government will continue to maintain close liaison with the Guangdong Provincial Government, and, under the spirit of complementarity and mutual benefits, deepen co-operation between Hong Kong and Guangdong, and work hand in hand to promote high-level collaboration in and high-quality development of the GBA."

The governments of Guangdong and Hong Kong have made steady progress in various co-operation areas. The progress made in individual areas and the directions set for future co-operation are outlined below.

Innovation and Technology (I&T)

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The National 14th Five-Year Plan has indicated clear support for Hong Kong's development into an international I&T centre, and has included, for the first time, the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone in the Loop as one of the major co-operation platforms in the GBA. This fully reflects the importance our country attaches to the development of Hong Kong's I&T and of the Loop. The HKSAR Government is taking forward at full steam the development of the Hong Kong Park (Hong Kong-Shenzhen Innovation and Technology Park), and will continue to promote jointly with Shenzhen the advantages of "one zone, two parks" under the "one country, two systems" principle in the Co-operation Zone. At the same time,

we will strengthen I&T collaboration with other Mainland cities of the GBA, jointly promoting the development of "new industrialisation" so as to construct a more comprehensive I&T industry chain, thereby realising the strategic goal of developing "new quality productive forces".

In the future, the HKSAR Government will continue to work closely with the Guangdong Provincial Government to explore measures to facilitate convenient cross-boundary flow of innovation elements such as personnel, materials and data, and to promote the development of the GBA into an international I&T centre. Guangdong and Hong Kong will continue to promote the transformation of scientific and technological achievements through the Guangdong-Hong Kong Technology Co-operation Funding Scheme, with a view to enhancing the productivity and competitiveness of enterprises in both places, and thereby contributing to our country's high-quality development. The HKSAR Government will establish the Building Technology Research Institute this year, leading the construction industry to strengthen innovative applications, accelerate the transformation and application of research results in specific construction sectors, thereby creating new value and supporting the high-quality development of the sector, and accelerating the development of new quality productive forces. In addition, the Institute will leverage Hong Kong's unique international advantages and its leading position in infrastructure development in the world, combining Hong Kong's rich experience and professional knowledge in applying international standards over the years, and collaborating with the Guangdong Provincial Government and relevant parties to co-ordinate and lead the development of GBA standards for construction sector, aligning to international standards. Besides, the HKSAR Government will continue to collaborate with the Mainland counterparts and will focus on the research and development, quality accreditation and international marketing under the Belt and Road Initiative for Modular Integrated Construction (MiC), with an aim to promoting MiC as an innovative industry with clear advantages in the GBA.

Developing the Northern Metropolis

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The Northern Metropolis is the new strategic growth area that will drive Hong Kong's future development, enabling Hong Kong to expand its scope of industry development. The HKSAR Government will continue to adopt an "industry-driven" approach as its key planning axle for the Northern Metropolis, striving to plan and create better development potential and opportunities, strengthening synergies with Shenzhen and other GBA cities, and injecting new momentum into the development of the entire GBA. The HKSAR Government plans to commence the first phase of development of San Tin Technopole by the end of this year, and will announce the land use proposals for the remaining new development areas (namely Ngau Tam Mei, Ma Tso Lung and New Territories North New Town) later this year. At the same time, the HKSAR Government is proactively exploring the adoption of different development models to better utilise market forces, including the "large-scale land disposal" approach.

Financial Services

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The HKSAR Government will continue to promote the mutual access between the financial markets of Guangdong and Hong Kong. Cross-boundary Wealth Management Connect has seen steady development since its launch, supporting the further opening-up of the financial market of the Mainland and at the same time consolidating Hong Kong's role as the global offshore Renminbi business hub and asset management centre. The HKSAR Government also strives to explore measures for deepening and widening mutual access between insurance markets, including early establishment of insurance after-sales service centres in places such as Nansha and Qianhai, with a view to providing comprehensive support services to GBA residents who are holders of Hong Kong insurance policies.

To deepen Guangdong-Hong Kong financial co-operation, the governments of the two places agreed to continue to explore implementing a series of financial co-operation measures, including to strengthen co-operation on green and sustainable finance, facilitate cross-boundary financing and capital flow, promote cross-boundary flow of financial talent, etc.

Construction of Rule of Law

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The HKSAR Government has been actively promoting the rule of law in the GBA with a view to continuously consolidating Hong Kong's position as an international legal and dispute resolution services centre in the Asia-Pacific region, while enabling the GBA to capitalise on its unique strengths under "one country, two systems, three jurisdictions". In April this year, the Department of Justice (DoJ) released for the first time the "Action Plan on the Construction of Rule of Law in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area", which sets out the guiding principle of "Three Interfaces, Two Connects and One GBA". The DoJ has been actively promoting the interface of mechanisms, regulatory frameworks and talents, so as to provide a rule of law environment that is stable, fair and predictable for the high-quality development of the GBA.

For legal services, the GBA Legal Professional Examination has been successfully held four times. With the strong support from the Central Government, the pilot scheme of the Examination has been approved to be extended to 2026, and the practice experience threshold for Hong Kong and Macao legal practitioners to enrol in the Examination has been lowered from five years to three years. Currently, over 450 Hong Kong and Macao legal practitioners have obtained the Lawyer's License (GBA). There are 20 representative offices of Hong Kong law firms established in Guangdong Province, and Guangdong law firms have set up branches in Hong Kong to provide diversified legal services.

Jointly pursuing the "dual carbon" goal

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The pursuit of the "dual carbon" goal is a common challenge as well as an opportunity for both Guangdong and Hong Kong. The HKSAR Government will continue to actively foster co-operation and exchange on carbon neutrality within the GBA. In respect of hydrogen energy development, HKSAR can leverage

its advantages of enjoying strong support of the motherland and being closely connected to the world to become a demonstration base to promote hydrogen technologies and products from the Mainland, including Guangdong, to overseas regions. We will also explore co-operation between the two places on the development of common design and operation standards for cross-boundary hydrogen vehicle and related supporting facilities. The HKSAR Government will also continue to promote relevant work under various co-operation arrangements and memoranda, including promoting the retro-commissioning of buildings, and advancing co-operation and exchange in the field of energy efficiency labelling between the two places.

The HKSAR Government supports the proposal under the "Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Ecological Environmental Protection Plan" to vigorously promote the development of a "Zero Waste" Bay Area, and explore co-operation models for achieving "Zero-waste City". Cities in the GBA can jointly explore the capacity and modes for developing a circular economy in the region, leveraging their respective competitive advantages, complementing each other's strengths, and jointly developing green industries, green energy and related facilities.

Cross-boundary Transport and Logistics

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The "Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area" puts emphasis on expediting infrastructural connectivity and raising the standards of passenger and cargo transport services. The ground-breaking policy of "Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles" (the Scheme) has been implemented since July 2023 and has been well-received by Hong Kong citizens. Currently over 65 000 Hong Kong private cars have participated in the Scheme. The vehicular flow of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) has been on the rise, reaching a daily average of 12 000 vehicles, representing an increase of more than 100 per cent as compared to the same period last year, among which vehicles under the Scheme account for about 40 per cent. The customs guarantee-free policy announced by the State Council in 2022 has simplified the application procedures and reduced handling fees for the Scheme, thereby increasing its attractiveness. The HKSAR Government is deeply grateful to the Central Government and the Guangdong Provincial Government for their strong support for the Scheme all along. The HKSAR Government will continue to work closely with the Guangdong Provincial Government to implement enhancement measures, continue to enhance the port facilities, and step up publicity to guide travellers to travel during non-peak hours. The implementation of the Scheme plays an important role in making better use of the HZMB and promoting inter-connectivity in the GBA.

The HKSAR Government has been actively developing the intermodal transport networks through various means so as to enhance the convenience for the transport of passengers and goods in the GBA to and from all parts of the world via Hong Kong. Among these, the Airport Authority Hong Kong and the Zhuhai Municipal Government signed a memorandum of understanding to deepen the co-operation between Hong Kong International Airport and Zhuhai Airport. In this regard, the "Fly-Via-Zhuhai-HK" direct passenger service was launched in December 2023, so that Mainland and international passengers can enjoy

seamless travel between the Mainland and other places in the world via Zhuhai and Hong Kong in an "air-land-air" mode using the HZMB. We look forward to the early implementation of other relevant co-operation in order to achieve greater synergy between the two airports.

Investment, Trade and Intellectual Property

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The National 14th Five-Year Plan clearly supports Hong Kong in enhancing its role as the international trade centre and developing into a regional intellectual property trading centre. The HKSAR Government will seize the enormous opportunities brought about by the national strategy and continue to strengthen the co-operation between Guangdong and Hong Kong, with a view to bringing the economic and trade co-operation of the two places to a higher level.

Through the promulgation of annual co-operation plans under the Guangdong/Hong Kong Expert Group on the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights (Expert Group), the Intellectual Property Department of the HKSAR Government continues to co-operate with relevant intellectual property (IP) departments in the Mainland and Macao in areas such as strengthening IP protection and nurturing IP professionals and talents in the GBA. Since 2003, Guangdong and Hong Kong have completed more than 270 co-operation projects. The Expert Group has finalised a two-year co-operation plan for 2024 and 2025, focusing on developing a world-class Bay Area, supporting the high-quality development of the manufacturing sector through strengthening and promoting co-operation in IP commercialisation, as well as maximising the branding impact of trademarks, copyright and geographical indications on encouraging domestic consumption, and bolstering co-operation in IP law enforcement. The co-operation plan will further deepen exchanges and co-operation on IP in the region, leveraging the comprehensive advantages of respective parties.

The HKSAR Government will continue to assist Hong Kong enterprises in taking the GBA as an entry point to develop the domestic sales market through the "GoGBA one-stop platform" of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC). The network of the "GoGBA Business Support Centres" has already been expanded to cover all nine Mainland cities of the GBA. The HKTDC plans to open a new centre in Futian in the third quarter of 2024, and will also strengthen the services of the "GoGBA one-stop platform", including launching the new "GoGBA Sector Series" in June this year to provide more comprehensive support for Hong Kong enterprises seeking to tap into the GBA market.

On the formulation of new GBA Standards, the Trade and Industry Department of the HKSAR Government has issued circulars to the trade earlier, promoting the priority areas announced by the Guangdong authorities for formulating GBA Standards this year and encouraging the trade to submit applications. The HKSAR Government will continue to support and facilitate the Guangdong Provincial Government in formulating GBA Standards for different products and services for voluntary use by the trade, and to maintain communications and discussions with them on further promoting the

development of GBA Standards. Meanwhile, the HKSAR Government is committed to further strengthening the investment and trade co-operation between Guangdong and Hong Kong, enhancing the level of integration of the GBA market as well as promoting the harmonisation of rules within the region, with a view to creating a first-class business environment and new advantages for international economic and trade co-operation.

Education

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On the higher education front, the Guangzhou campus of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology was established in September 2022. The formal establishment of City University of Hong Kong (Dongguan) has also been approved by the Ministry of Education and will commence operation in September this year. These collaboration projects will help build a talent base in the GBA. Hong Kong and Guangdong will strengthen higher education collaboration between both sides, capitalising on the "golden label" and highly internationalised characteristic of Hong Kong's higher education sector to nurture talents for the development of the country.

On the basic education front, currently there are a number of schools for Hong Kong children in the Mainland cities of the GBA providing primary and secondary education for children of Hong Kong people. The Education Bureau (EDB) of HKSAR Government and the Department of Education of Guangdong Province successfully conducted the 2024 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination on a pilot basis in two schools for Hong Kong children in the Mainland cities of the GBA to provide convenience for qualified school candidates.

In addition, Guangdong and Hong Kong will continue to closely collaborate to arrange the participation of Hong Kong teachers and students in Mainland exchange programmes and study tours, in order to deepen their understanding of the country's development, enhance their sense of national identity and promote co-operation and exchanges among schools and teachers of the two places at a more diversified, broader and higher level. With the great support from the Department of Education of Guangdong Province and other relevant authorities, EDB has smoothly launched the Mainland study tours for the subject of Citizenship and Social Development in the 2022/23 school year. Over 48 000 senior secondary students and teachers had participated in the study tours to the Guangdong Province, and positive feedback had been received. The study tours for the 2023/24 school year have been smoothly conducted so far. Besides, EDB organised 25 Mainland study tours for teachers in Guangdong province from April 2023 to July 2024, with about 2 940 participants. The first Teacher Training and Exchange Base was also established in the South China Normal University in Guangdong in January 2024. Furthermore, EDB and the Department of Education of Guangdong Province have been running the Guangdong-Hong Kong Sister Kindergarten Exchange Programme since the 2023/24 school year to strengthen connection between the Mainland and Hong Kong in early childhood education.

Talent Co-operation

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On strengthening co-operation in talent exchanges, the current-term HKSAR Government has launched a series of more proactive measures to attract talents. The HKSAR Government will continue to enhance and strengthen Hong Kong's dual roles as an international talent hub and the country's gateway for talent, and discuss with the Guangdong Provincial Government to strengthen co-operation in various aspects to expedite the building of a talent hub in the GBA and promote high-quality development of the GBA and the country.

Guangdong and Hong Kong signed a framework agreement on promoting talent co-operation in January this year and set up a co-ordination mechanism on Guangdong-Hong Kong talent co-operation to further promote the flow of diverse talents in the GBA. This turns over a new chapter for the GBA to attract diverse talents. The HKSAR Government successfully organised the Global Talent Summit • Hong Kong in May this year to promote globally Hong Kong's dual roles as an international talent hub and the country's gateway for talents. The "9+2" cities in the GBA signed a memorandum of understanding on promoting collaboration on talent services in the GBA to strengthen co-operation in talent attraction, nurturing and exchanges.

Healthcare

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The HKSAR Government announced on February 19 this year that seven medical institutions in the Mainland cities of the GBA have been included in the Elderly Health Care Voucher Greater Bay Area Pilot Scheme (Pilot Scheme), offering eligible Hong Kong elderly persons additional options of services points for using the Elderly Health Care Vouchers (EHCVs) in the GBA. Among the medical institutions included in the Pilot Scheme, five of them provide integrated services (including dental services) which are located in Guangzhou, Nansha, Zhongshan, Dongguan and Shenzhen, while the other two are dental institutions located in Shenzhen, enabling eligible Hong Kong elderly persons to use EHCVs to pay for services received. It is estimated that some 1.7 million eligible Hong Kong elderly persons will benefit from the Pilot Scheme. The coverage of EHCVs extended to include the First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University (FAH-SYSU) in Guangzhou from June 28, offering another service point where eligible Hong Kong elderly persons can use EHCVs for outpatient healthcare services in the GBA. Starting from July 18, the coverage of EHCVs will be further extended to include ZhongshanChenxinghai Hospital of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine in Zhongshan. The remaining pilot medical institutions will launch the relevant arrangements from the third quarter of this year.

As regards health and medical innovation, the HKSAR Government will establish the Greater Bay Area International Clinical Trial Institute (GBAICTI) in the Hetao area by the end of 2024. The GBAICTI will provide one-stop clinical trial support services to further enhance the capacity and efficiency of clinical trials in Hong Kong. The HKSAR Government is actively discussing with the Shenzhen Municipal Government to jointly establish a clinical trial collaboration platform in the Hong Kong Park and Shenzhen Park of the Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone under the "one zone, two parks" model for the co-ordinated

development of clinical trials, with a view to establishing a GBA clinical trial network leveraging a population base of over 86 million for conducting cross-boundary multi-centre clinical trials, and developing the HKSAR into an international health and medical innovation hub in the long run.

Regarding cross-boundary ambulance arrangement, the HKSAR Government is finalising the implementation details of the "Pilot Scheme for Direct Cross-Boundary Ambulance Transfer in the GBA" with the governments of Guangdong and Shenzhen, to enable direct point-to-point transfer of patients with special medical needs from The Hong Kong University-Shenzhen Hospital to public hospitals in Hong Kong without the need to change ambulances at control points.

As regards the development of Chinese medicine (CM), the HKSAR Government has been actively promoting the construction of the GBA CM highlands, and has taken forward work on various fronts, including the signing of strategic collaboration agreement between the Guangdong Provincial Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine and the Chinese Medicine Hospital of Hong Kong to establish a close partnership between the two hospitals and support the continuing development of the Chinese Medicine Hospital of Hong Kong; the roll-out of programmes such as the "GBA CM Visiting Scholars Programme" and "CM Enhanced In-patient Training Programme with GBA" by the Hospital Authority to foster talent exchange and nurturing; the recruitment of Hong Kong CM practitioners by public healthcare institutions in the GBA; and the registration and sale of Hong Kong-registered traditional proprietary Chinese medicines for external use in the Mainland through streamlined approval procedures, etc.

Emergency Management

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The HKSAR Government signed the "Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Emergency Management Co-operation and Greater Bay Area Emergency Response Operation Co-operation Framework Agreement" (the co-operation framework agreement) with the Guangdong Provincial Government and the Macao SAR Government in Hong Kong on June 14 this year. To further improve the cross-boundary emergency response and rescue mechanism and fully leverage the complementarity of emergency response and rescue units in the three places, the three governments will collaboratively formulate and take forward a new "Greater Bay Area Emergency Response and Rescue Operational Plan" to strengthen the region's ability to prevent, mitigate and relieve natural disasters and other major public emergencies. The co-operation framework agreement is an important measure to strengthen regional emergency response capacity.

Youth Development

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To promote mutual development of young people in Guangdong and Hong Kong, and encourage Hong Kong young people to seize the opportunities brought about by the development of the GBA, the HKSAR Government continues to take forward initiatives such as the Funding Scheme for Youth Internship in the Mainland and the Funding Scheme for Youth Exchange in the Mainland. The

Schemes facilitate Hong Kong young people to experience first-hand the historical and cultural heritage and rapid development of our country, and deepen their understanding of the national development and have more interaction and exchange with people from the Mainland, thereby strengthening their national identity and national pride. In December 2023, the HKSAR Government established the Alliance of Hong Kong Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the GBA to provide a one-stop information, publicity and exchange platform for Hong Kong young entrepreneurs. In addition, the HKSAR Government launched a new round of the Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in April 2024 to further support Hong Kong young people starting their businesses in the GBA.

Culture

4th Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Culture and Arts Festival

The HKSAR Government attaches great importance to driving arts and cultural exchange and collaboration among GBA cities. The HKSAR Government will organise the 4th Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Culture and Arts Festival this year, with more than 100 arts and cultural activities taking place in Hong Kong and other GBA cities, promoting people and cultural exchanges.

15th National Games

15th National Games for Persons with Disabilities and 9th National Special Olympic Games

The 15th National Games (NG), the 12th National Games for Persons with Disabilities (NGD) and the 9th National Special Olympic Games (NSOG) will be co-hosted by Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao in 2025. The HKSAR Government attaches great importance to the preparatory work concerned. The Organising Committee of the 15th NG and the Organising Committee of the 12th NGD and 9th NSOG held their inaugural meetings on April 11 this year. On the same day, announcements were also made on that the 15th NG and the 12th NGD and 9th NSOG would be held on November 9 to 21, 2025 and December 8 to 15, 2025 respectively, and on the distribution of work among Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. Since the inaugural meetings, the preparatory work for the Games has proceeded to a new stage. The governments of Guangdong and Hong Kong have commenced detailed discussions on various aspects of work. The HKSAR Government will continue to maintain close liaison with the governments of Guangdong and Macao SAR as well as dovetailing with the requirements of the General Administration of Sport of China with a view to making good preparations for the Games.

Co-operation agreement signing ceremony

Co-operation agreement signing ceremony between the Department of Justice of Guangdong Province and the Department of Justice of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

Six co-operation agreements were signed after the meeting:

- Arrangement on Exchanges and Co-operation between the Department of Justice of Guangdong Province and the Department of Justice of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region;

- Co-operation Agreement between Guangdong and Hong Kong on the Work on Quality, Testing and Certification;
- Agreement on Exchanges and Co-operation in Food Safety for Hong Kong/Guangdong;
- Memorandum of Understanding on Facilitation of Technological Exchange and Co-operation on Sustainable Development of Agriculture;
- Memorandum of Understanding for Co-operation on Exemption of Hong Kong Residents from Participation in Basic Pension Insurance; and
- Memorandum of Understanding between the Health Bureau of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the First Affiliated Hospital, Sun Yat-sen University on Elderly Health Care Voucher Greater Bay Area Pilot Scheme and Related Policy Studies.

24th Plenary

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The 24th Plenary held today was co-chaired by the Chief Executive of the HKSAR, Mr John Lee, and the Governor of Guangdong Province, Mr Wang Weizhong. Members of the HKSAR delegation included the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki; the Deputy Secretary for Justice, Mr Cheung Kwok-kwan; the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Erick Tsang Kwok-wai; the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui; the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau; the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Lam Sai-hung; the Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Professor Sun Dong; the Acting Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Dr Bernard Chan; and the Acting Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Miss Diane Wong.

Deputy Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR, Mr Yin Zonghua, and Member of the Office Leadership of the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, Mr Xiang Bin, also attended the meeting as special guests.



