

## **CE expresses sorrow over terrorist attack victims in New Zealand**

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, today (March 15) expressed deep sorrow over the loss of lives in the terrorist attack in New Zealand and extended sympathies and condolences to the injured and families of the victims.

"Hong Kong and New Zealand are open and diverse societies, embracing respect and inclusiveness. We are deeply shocked and saddened by the severe casualties caused by the terrorist attack in New Zealand. Our thoughts are with the New Zealand people during this difficult time and we strongly condemn the terrorist attack," Mrs Lam said.

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## **HA approves average selling prices and arrangements for Sale of HOS Flats 2019 and WSM 2019**

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Housing Authority:

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) Subsidised Housing Committee (SHC) today (March 15) approved the average selling prices and sale arrangements for the Sale of Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) Flats 2019 (HOS 2019) and White Form Secondary Market Scheme (WSM) 2019, as well as the White Form (WF) income and asset limits for the two exercises.

At the meeting today, SHC endorsed putting up six new HOS developments for sale under HOS 2019, providing a total of 4 871 flats. These six developments are:

1. 603 flats in Kwun Tak Court, Ho Man Tin with a saleable area of 41.3 square metres (sq m) to 52.8 sq m
2. 814 flats in Hoi Tak Court, Cheung Sha Wan with a saleable area of 25.9 sq m to 48.5 sq m
3. 494 flats in Sheung Man Court, Kwai Chung with a saleable area of 26.6 sq m to 42.6 sq m
4. 1 395 flats in Yung Ming Court, Tseung Kwan O with a saleable area of 26.2 sq m to 52.8 sq m
5. 735 flats in Kam Fai Court, Ma On Shan with a saleable area of 25.6 sq m to 42.3 sq m

6. 830 flats in Yuk Wo Court, Sha Tin with a saleable area of 27.3 sq m to 43.0 sq m

Details of these six developments are set out in Annex.

The average selling prices for HOS 2019 flats are set at 41% discount from the assessed market values (59% of assessed market values). "According to the Government's new pricing policy on subsidised sale flat (SSF) announced last year, the discount applied to the assessed market value of flats for sale is determined on the basis of the affordability benchmark of at least 75% of the flats for sale are affordable to the non-owner occupier households earning median monthly household income (currently around \$39,100, net of Mandatory Provident Fund contributions), assuming that they need to spend no more than 40% of their monthly income on mortgage payment. Under this pricing mechanism, we will assess affordability by applying a discount of 30% to the assessed market prices of all the flats with reference to the median monthly household income. A higher discount will be adopted to ensure the prices of 75% of the flats are lower than the highest affordable price for households earning median monthly income (spending no more than 40% of their monthly income on mortgage payment). The discount rate (at a minimum of 30%) for each sale exercise will therefore be different," a spokesman for the HA said.

The selling prices of the flats of the six new developments for HOS 2019, after applying the discount, will range from \$1.56 million to \$5.29 million, averaging at about \$2.98 million. The application period is expected to start in May and balloting will be held in August. Successful applicants of HOS 2019 will be invited to select HOS flats starting from November this year.

SHC decided to maintain the quota between Green Form (GF) and WF applicants at 50:50 under HOS 2019 and allow flexibility to re-allocate any remaining quota from the GF queue to the WF queue, and vice versa.

Furthermore, for the quota of WSM 2019, SHC decided to increase the annual quota to 3,000 while maintaining the allocation ratio for family and one-person applicants at 9:1.

In addition, with effect from the SSF sale exercises this year, including HOS 2019 and WSM 2019, e-submission service will be provided in addition to the current paper-based submission.

For GF applicants who are living in HA's or the Hong Kong Housing Society's public housing estates, staff of their respective estate offices will contact them and verify their household information after receiving their e-submissions. They will have to return the pre-filled e-forms with signatures of the applicant and all family members aged 18 or above to their respective estate offices for further processing.

As WSM 2019 will be launched together with HOS 2019, the application

procedures will be further streamlined. One single application form will be used to cover both schemes while applicants may choose HOS 2019, WSM 2019 or both. Application fees are \$250 for HOS 2019, \$160 for WSM 2019 and \$410 for both schemes.

Starting from HOS 2019, the existing eligibility criteria for WF applicants that all household members included in the application form are required to live together with the applicant at the time of application will be removed. "Taking into account that the living-together requirement may not be practical against the prevailing socio-economic circumstances, the SHC agreed that this requirement might render concerned households ineligible for HOS/WSM. This goes against the HOS/WSM's objective of addressing the home-ownership aspirations of these low to middle-income families," the spokesman said.

As at February 1, 22 rescinded flats from five HOS developments (namely Ka Shun Court, Ping Yan Court, Ngan Wai Court, Ngan Ho Court and Choi Hing Court) previously put up for sale in 2016 and 2017 will be included for resale in this sale exercise. Apart from the 22 rescinded flats, any additional rescinded flats up to October this year will also be included for resale in this sale exercise. The average selling prices of rescinded flats for resale will be set at the same discount of this sale exercise, that is 41% (59% of assessed market values).

"A quota of 1 500 flats will be set aside for families applying under the Priority Scheme for Families with Elderly Members (Priority Elderly Scheme). This follows the practice in the last few HOS sale exercises that a quota of about 30% of the flats for sale was set for this category," the spokesman said. SHC also agreed to reserve 500 flats, representing about 10% of the flats, for one-person applicants to address their keen home ownership aspirations.

SHC also decided to regularise the streamlined application arrangements for HOS and other SSF (including Green Form Subsidised Home Ownership Scheme (GSH)) sale exercises from HOS 2019 onwards. Applicants who wish to apply for the next SSF in a household category different from that for HOS are required to inform HA during the stipulated application period of the next SSF exercise.

At today's meeting, SHC also noted that the revised alienation restrictions for SSF, as endorsed at the SHC meeting in November last year, will start to apply to sale exercises launched from HOS 2019 onwards. Flats to be sold under HOS 2019 are subject to the alienation restrictions to be set out in the Government Leases. The rescinded flats which were first sold under the previous sale exercises will continue to be subject to the alienation restrictions stipulated in the Housing Ordinance.

In order to provide an avenue for WSM buyers of SSF sold by HA from 2019, who are not allowed to sell the flat in the Secondary Market within the first two years of the transaction, to liquidate their assets in any unforeseen circumstances, SHC agreed to allow these WSM buyers to seek

approval from the Director of Housing for exemption from the restriction for resale in the Secondary Market within the first two years of the transaction where circumstances warrant.

Sales booklets/sales leaflets providing sales arrangements, basic information of the new HOS developments and the rescinded flats, and the flats' size and price ranges will also be made available to the public starting seven days before the commencement and up to the end of the application period.

Sales brochures covering full details of the developments and rescinded flats as well as the price lists will be made available for public collection starting seven days before commencement of the flat selection period.

At the same meeting, SHC also reviewed the WF income and asset limits for HOS 2019 and WSM 2019 according to the established mechanism, and endorsed the WF income and asset limits at \$58,000 per month and \$2,010,000 respectively. According to established practice, the income and asset limits for WF one-person applicants will be set at half of the limits for family applicants, at \$29,000 and \$1,005,000 respectively.

In deriving the above limits, SHC agreed to fine-tune the sampling method on the average price of reference flats (private residential units of about 40 square metre saleable area in the Extended Urban Area and the New Territories). Given the wide spread of such units in terms of building age, SHC has agreed to make reference to prices of all such transactions in the period, regardless of the building age, when working out the average reference flat price. The relevant reference price in the fourth quarter of 2018 is \$5.76 million.

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## [HKMPB delegation led by STH concludes Nordic visit \(with photos\)](#)

The delegation of the Hong Kong Maritime and Port Board (HKMPB) led by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, concluded their visit to the Nordic countries in Bergen, Norway, today (March 15, Bergen time).

In the morning, Mr Chan and members of the delegation called on local shipping enterprises and visited an environmentally friendly ferry and cruise liner to learn about the application of green shipping technology.

This was followed by a meeting with the Mayor of Bergen, Ms Marte Mjøs Persen, and representatives from Bergen's maritime sector for a discussion on the maritime development in the two places.

Mr Chan and the delegation will leave Bergen later today and be back in Hong Kong tomorrow afternoon (March 16).



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## Income and asset limits for public rental housing for 2019-20

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Housing Authority:

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA)'s Subsidised Housing Committee (SHC) today (March 15) discussed the outcome of the review of income and asset limits for public rental housing (PRH) for 2019-20, and endorsed the income and asset limits for applicants of different household sizes with effect from April 1 (see table).

"The PRH income and asset limits are reviewed annually in accordance

with the established mechanism to keep them in line with the prevailing social and economic conditions. The PRH income and asset limits for 2019-20 will increase by an overall average of 4.2 per cent and 3.1 per cent respectively over those for 2018-19," a spokesman for the HA said.

SHC also endorsed the exclusion of the Working Family Allowance (WFA) from the calculation of PRH applicants' income starting from April 1, 2019.

"SHC considers that as the eligibility for WFA and the monthly amount of WFA received are pegged to the income and working hours of the household in each month, the monthly amount received by the applicant household fluctuates. WFA should hence not be treated in the same way as other government financial subsidies which are provided in fixed amount and on a regular basis. For applicants whose PRH applications were cancelled because their income exceeded the PRH income limit due to inclusion of WFA, they may submit their PRH applications afresh," the spokesman added.

Under the established mechanism, the PRH income limits are derived using a household expenditure approach, which consists of housing costs and non-housing costs, plus a contingency provision. Housing costs measure the costs of renting private accommodation comparable to PRH, and these depend on the differential unit rents of private accommodation per square metre and reference flat sizes (i.e. average space allocated to PRH applicants in the past three years). Non-housing costs are determined with reference to the results of the latest Household Expenditure Survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD), with adjustments made according to the latest movements in the Consumer Price Index (CPI)(A) (excluding housing costs), or the change in the nominal wage index obtained through the Labour Earnings Survey conducted by C&SD, whichever is higher. As regards the PRH asset limits, they are adjusted with reference to movements in CPI(A) over the year.

At the meeting, some members were also concerned that with the upward adjustment to the PRH income and asset limits, the number of households eligible for PRH might increase. They considered that more resources should be devoted to enhancing eligibility checking on PRH applicants, including random checks on applicants' ownership of properties or other assets in places outside Hong Kong.

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## **Formal Adoption of the UPR Working Group Outcome Report on China by UN**



# Human Rights Council

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) formally adopted the outcome report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on China (including Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)) today (March 15, Geneva time).

The UPR Working Group of the UNHRC held a review meeting on November 6 last year to examine the third report submitted by China (covering Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions), and adopted the review report on China on November 9. The report was further discussed at the meeting of UNHRC today. A team of HKSAR Government officials, led by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, attended the meeting as part of China delegation.

The Head of the Chinese delegation is Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Le Yucheng. Mr Cheung spoke at the meeting in his capacity as deputy head of the delegation.

Mr Cheung said that the HKSAR Government had been successfully implementing "one country, two systems", "Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong" and a high degree of autonomy in strict accordance with the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Basic Law of the HKSAR with the full support of the Central People's Government since 1997. Human rights and freedom in Hong Kong are fully protected by the Basic Law, Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance and others.

"We are determined to safeguard the rule of law and freedom. They are the core values of Hong Kong and cornerstone of our long-term prosperity and stability. Judicial independence is guaranteed by the Basic Law and firmly underpins the rule of law. The power of final adjudication of Hong Kong is vested in our Court of Final Appeal, which may invite judges from other common law jurisdictions to sit on it. Hong Kong ranks first in Asia in terms of judicial independence. We are also one of the world's safest cities," he said.

Mr Cheung pointed out that Hong Kong was a vibrant, highly open and international city. The Heritage Foundation of the United States has ranked Hong Kong the world's freest economy for 25 consecutive years.

"We will continue to build a caring, inclusive and fair Hong Kong by investing heavily in social services, improving people's livelihood, enhancing children's well-being and protecting the rights of all workers."

"'One country, two systems' has proven a successful innovation. We are committed to upholding the principle of 'one country' whilst leveraging our unique advantages under 'two systems'. We will seize the immense opportunities of the national Belt and Road Initiative and Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area development to propel Hong Kong forward," Mr

Cheung said.

A Government spokesperson said that the report of the UPR Working Group covered a total of 346 recommendations made by Member States for China. Among them, two concerning China (covering HKSAR and Macao SAR), and another four concerning HKSAR. After careful consideration, the HKSAR Government stated its position on each of the recommendations which was subsequently incorporated into the Addendum of the report.

Representatives of 13 Member States and 10 non-governmental organisations spoke at the plenary meeting of the UNHRC. After discussion, the UNHRC formally adopted the outcome report of the Working Group on the UPR on China.