

Remarks by CE at media session before ExCo (with video)

Following are the remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (June 24):

Reporter: Good morning, Mr Lee. With Director Xia Baolong (Director 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 Xia Baolong) wrapping up his five-day visit last Sunday (June 22), what do you make of his visit, and what's the Government's plan in carrying out his expectations and wishes to Hong Kong? And the Government has raised the travel alert for Israel and Iran to black on last Thursday (June 19). What's your assessment on the situation and how many SAR (Special Administrative Region) residents have sought help so far? Thank you.

Chief Executive: I thanked Director Xia for personally attending the 5th Anniversary of Promulgation & Implementation of Hong Kong National Security Law Forum in Hong Kong, and taking the opportunity to inspect Hong Kong. I sincerely thanked him for affirming the work of me and the governing team on our proactive approach and determination to forge ahead. He encouraged me and the SAR Government to continue our efforts in safeguarding national security, while balancing well its relation with development. Director Xia also encouraged us to capitalise on the current stable situation to build strong development and to build the economy and improve people's livelihood. He reminded Hong Kong to steadfastly uphold national security and not to forget the harm inflicted on the citizens and the city of Hong Kong by the 2019 "black-clad" violence and the attempted "colour revolution", and we should remember the pain, even though the wound has healed.

Director Xia's keynote speech in the Forum has charted the course of Hong Kong's future development. He asked Hong Kong to build high-quality development by fully implementing the holistic approach to national security, leveraging Hong Kong's unique advantages in its connectivity with the Mainland and the world, utilising Hong Kong's strengths in the rule of law and upholding Hong Kong's executive-led system to improve governance of the Hong Kong SAR and promote reform. During his inspection, he expressed strong endorsement of the work of the District Councils, the Care Teams (District Services and Community Care Teams) and the concept of Community Living Rooms. I am grateful to Director Xia for his caring and support for Hong Kong. We will spare no effort in safeguarding national security and co-ordinating security and development. We will focus on four key areas.

First, Hong Kong must fully and accurately implement the "one country, two systems" principle and thoroughly adopt a holistic approach to national security.

Second, adhere to the solid foundation of the rule of law and leverage

Hong Kong's international strengths, especially the professional advantages in both common law and civil law systems.

Third, cherish the stable situation and seize development opportunities, actively integrate into the national development, deepen international exchanges and co-operation, leverage Hong Kong's advantages of our connectivity with the Mainland and the world, and promote the two-way flow of overseas and Mainland enterprises, capital and technology through "going global" and attracting international investments.

Fourth, enhance traditional strengths, focusing on reform and innovation, enhancing the competitiveness in finance, trade, shipping and technology. We will boldly reform, innovate and create. We will accelerate the development of the Northern Metropolis, the Hong Kong Park of the Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone, and we shall make development of industries as our fundamental goal, enhance innovation and technology and drive reforms to speed up and strengthen efficiency.

On your question regarding the conflicts in the Middle East, the Spokesperson of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has already stated that China urges parties to the conflict to prevent the situation from spiralling up, make sure the fighting will not spill over, and return to the track of political settlement. China stands ready to enhance communication and co-ordination with various parties to pool efforts together and uphold justice, and play a constructive role for restoring peace in the Middle East. I support the stance of our country and I totally agree. I support ensuring the safety of civilians and resolving issues through diplomatic means. I also call on the international community to jointly safeguard global peace. I hope the situation in the Middle East resumes to peace and stability as soon as possible.

In view of the latest developments in Israel and Iran, the Government has already raised the Outbound Travel Alert for Israel and Iran to black last week. This signifies a severe threat. Hong Kong residents should avoid all travel to Israel and Iran. They should attend to personal safety, leave or relocate to relatively safe areas immediately. As of June 23, the Immigration Department has received enquiries from 21 Hong Kong residents who were in Israel or Iran. Twenty of them have already departed safely. The Department will continue to maintain close contacts with the remaining one Hong Kong resident and provide appropriate assistance. It is important that Hong Kong residents in these two countries, or in areas where threats may spiral up too to pay close attention to personal safety, leave and relocate to other safer areas, pay attention to the developments through the news, what we, the Government, broadcast, and also the websites of the Security Bureau. We will keep close communication with the Office of the Commissioner of the MFA in Hong Kong, and we will also maintain close communication with relevant embassies. The Security Bureau will closely monitor the situation. Any updates will be issued and announced immediately, and we will also be updating relevant mobile apps as well.

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