

Secretary for Health continues to attend 77th World Health Assembly in Geneva (with photos)

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, continued to attend the 77th World Health Assembly (WHA) of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva, Switzerland, yesterday (May 28, Geneva time). He also took the chance to meet with other participants and WHO officials to tell the world the good stories of Hong Kong and the good stories of our country.

As members of the Chinese delegation, Professor Lo and the Director of Health, Dr Ronald Lam, attended the plenary session on the second day of the WHA while Vice-minister of the National Health Commission Mr Cao Xuetao addressed the plenary session on healthcare development in the Mainland.

In addition to attending the plenary session, Professor Lo and Dr Lam met with the First Deputy Minister of Healthcare of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr Timur Sultangaziyev, to exchange views and share experiences on issues including promoting traditional medicine, nurturing healthcare talent and primary healthcare development.

Professor Lo also gifted the delegation of the Republic of Kazakhstan the books published by the Department of Health (DH) under the titles of "Hong Kong Characteristic Medicinal Plants" and "Compendium on Identification of Easily Confused Species of Chinese Materia Medica in Hong Kong by Macroscopic and Microscopic Characteristics". He said, "The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government is moving full steam ahead to promote the development of two flagship organisations, namely the Chinese Medicine Hospital of Hong Kong and the Government Chinese Medicines Testing Institute, and at the same time, work with the Chinese medicine (CM) sector to formulate the CM Development Blueprint to map out the visions and strategies for the way forward in CM development as well as aspects including CM services, profession, industry, education, research and public education to drive the high-quality development of CM in Hong Kong on all fronts, thereby contributing to the overall development of CM in the country and assisting the national drive for CM to go global."

Professor Lo and Dr Lam also took the opportunity to exchange views with senior officials of the WHO on various public health-related issues.

At a meeting with the WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific, Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala, Professor Lo stressed, "The HKSAR Government has been contributing to the safeguard of global public health by acting along the health strategies of the Mainland, and has also been strenuously supporting and acting in concert with the WHO and the Mainland in tackling various public health challenges. The DH is designated as the WHO Collaborating Centre for Traditional Medicine and the WHO Collaborating Centre for Smoking Cessation and Treatment of Tobacco Dependence. Furthermore, the WHO

designated the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the Centre for Health Protection of the DH as a reference laboratory for various communicable diseases including COVID-19, making significant contribution to fight epidemics worldwide. The HKSAR Government will keep on maintaining close contact with member states and areas of the WHO on various issues to safeguard the health of citizens."

"Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala was impressed by the HKSAR Government's efforts in promoting tobacco control and the development of primary healthcare. With our efforts in tobacco control over the past 40 years, Hong Kong's smoking prevalence is now attaining an all-time low of about 9.1 per cent, as compared with the 23 per cent in early 1980s. Our target is to further lower the smoking prevalence to 7.8 per cent by 2025. To achieve this target, we are examining the implementation of different tobacco control measures in phases with a view to further reducing the smoking prevalence to safeguard public health."

While meeting the Unit Head of Global Influenza Programme of the WHO, Dr Zhang Wenqing, Professor Lo introduced to her the measures taken by Hong Kong in combating influenza. Attendees of the meeting agreed that strengthening of surveillance on influenza viruses, clinical investigations, research, development and manufacturing of vaccines, as well as public publicity and education, are all vital moves to combat influenza (including seasonal influenza, influenza infected from animals to humans and global outbreak).

At a meeting with the Director for Regulation and Prequalification of the WHO, Dr Rogério Gaspar, Professor Lo introduced to him the enhancement of the prevailing regulatory, approval and registration mechanism of drugs, as well as the latest developments of promoting the research and development and clinical trial of drugs and medical devices in Hong Kong and collaboration of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. During the meeting, both parties exchanged views on the strengthening of the regulatory regime of drugs and medical devices, as well as the WHO Global Benchmarking Tool for evaluation of regulatory systems of medical products. They expressed support for further enhancement of the regulatory mechanism of drugs and medical devices in Hong Kong for more effective collaboration with drug regulatory authorities worldwide in public health protection.

Professor Lo proceeds to Basel today (May 29, Geneva time) to begin his duty visit in Switzerland.



