

## Secretary for Health meets with WHO Regional Director for Western Pacific (with photos)

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, today (March 10) met with the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director for the Western Pacific, Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala, who is visiting Hong Kong, to exchange views on public health issues.

Professor Lo said, "Hong Kong, China is in the WHO Western Pacific Region. Representatives of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government attend the World Health Assembly of the WHO as a member of the Chinese delegation every year. The HKSAR Government has been strenuously supporting and collaborating with the WHO and the nation in tackling various public health challenges, striving to safeguard public health and contribute to global public health. The Department of Health (DH) has been designated as the WHO Collaborating Centre for Traditional Medicine and the WHO Collaborating Centre for Smoking Cessation and Treatment of Tobacco Dependence. The Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the Centre for Health Protection of the DH has also been designated as a reference laboratory for various communicable diseases, making significant contributions to global anti-epidemic work."

At the meeting, Professor Lo gave Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala an overview of the highly efficient public healthcare system in Hong Kong. Professor Lo said, "As the main provider of public healthcare services, the Hospital Authority (HA) is the cornerstone of Hong Kong's healthcare system. It serves nearly 90 per cent of Hong Kong's population of some 7.5 million and provides integrated healthcare services that are heavily subsidised by the Government at nearly 98 per cent, so as to ensure that no citizen is denied appropriate healthcare services due to financial difficulty. The HKSAR Government has established a robust healthcare safety net for citizens, and Hong Kong's healthcare system has taken the world lead in terms of quality and efficiency for many years.

"However, with an ageing population and the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases, the HKSAR Government needs to keep abreast of the times and reform the healthcare system, with a view to optimising the use of precious and limited healthcare resources, and ensuring the sustainability of Hong Kong's healthcare system to cope with the increasing healthcare needs of members of the public."

Professor Lo also introduced Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala to Hong Kong's strategies in promoting the development of primary healthcare. The HKSAR Government released the Primary Healthcare Blueprint in December 2022, and is committed to building a prevention-oriented and community-based healthcare system, as well as providing personalised, coherent and comprehensive

healthcare services to citizens through initiatives such as the Chronic Disease Co-Care Pilot Scheme and the District Health Centre network. The HKSAR Government will continue to promote primary healthcare development on all fronts and strengthen primary healthcare services as a whole, with a view to contributing to the WHO's vision of health equity.

The Chief Executive of the HA, Dr Tony Ko, and a number of officials of the Health Bureau and the DH, also attended the meeting today.

