

Speech by CE at opening ceremony of 2nd Women Power Forum (English only) (with photo/video)

Following is the video speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the opening ceremony of the 2nd Women Power Forum today (October 23):

Madame Huang Xiaowei (Vice-President and First Member of the Secretariat of the All-China Women's Federation), Deputy Director Lu Xinning (Deputy Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), Commissioner Liu Guangyuan (Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), Mr Mohammad Naciri (Regional Director of UN Women for Asia and the Pacific), Ms Pansy Ho (Chairperson of the Women Power Forum), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to congratulate the Hong Kong Federation of Women for hosting the second edition of the Women Power Forum, providing an excellent platform for women leaders from Hong Kong, the Mainland and around the world to come together and to drive social innovation, share game-changing ideas, and craft opportunities for positive change.

The theme of this year's Forum is "Herald a New Chapter of Harmony and Growth for our World City", which I think is most timely. As I noted in my 2021 Policy Address delivered earlier this month, Hong Kong is indeed entering a new era, thanks to the double safeguards of the National Security Law and the improved electoral system. These two important initiatives by the Central Authorities have brought stability and renewed confidence to our economy and to our community. More importantly, they have brought the implementation of the all-important "One Country, Two Systems" principle back on the right track. That would provide a solid basis for us to plan for the inclusive and rewarding future that we all want.

With the Central Authorities' support, opportunities abound in Hong Kong's future. Our nation's 14th Five-Year Plan supports Hong Kong's development of eight global hubs or centres. Some, like financial services, trade, transport, legal and dispute resolution services are sectors in which we have long demonstrated our international prowess. Others are areas in which Hong Kong's development is up and coming. They include developing Hong Kong into an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchange, and an international innovation and technology hub.

In addition to the 14th Five-Year Plan, the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the recently announced Qianhai Plan will bring unlimited opportunities for enterprises and professional services providers in Hong Kong. As long as we can leverage the Central Authorities' support and proactively integrate into the national development, a bright future awaits us.

That future must be built on gender equality. We're making good progress. It begins with education. Today, more than half the students enrolled in programmes funded by our University Grants Committee are female. They are excelling academically, and I have no doubt that they will also excel in the workplace.

My Government has instituted various measures to help women stay in the workforce and to promote women's development. These measures include extending statutory maternity leave to 14 weeks, strengthening child care services, providing more babycare rooms in government premises, and amending legislation to make discrimination against and harassment of breastfeeding illegal. With the Government's efforts over the years, I am pleased to note that the female labour force participation rate has risen to about 50 per cent. Half of our solicitors and public accountants are female, and 37 per cent of managerial positions are now held by women.

I am equally pleased to see that our efforts in promoting women's participation in public affairs in my term of office are gradually bearing fruit. The percentage of female members in government advisory and statutory bodies has reached 35 per cent in June this year, meeting the target set in earlier years.

And as the first lady Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, I am particularly pleased that we have achieved a few firsts during my tenure. In 2018, I appointed the first female judge to the Court of Final Appeal. Also in 2018, we welcomed the first female Chairperson of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. Last year, we had the first female civil engineer Director of Drainage Services. Since a couple of months ago, Hong Kong's public prosecutions authority has been headed by a female lawyer. And just two days ago, the Central Government appointed the first female Commissioner of Customs and Excise of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. As a whole, some 40 per cent of Government's civil servants and directorate officers are women today, and I look forward to seeing more women in leadership positions in the near future.

Hong Kong is definitely not short of women leaders, and many of them are present today. With your support, we will continue to make a difference. We will continue to compel change, to ensure that the voice of women is heard, and heeded, in Hong Kong.

I wish today's Forum every success. Thank you.

