

Welcome remarks by SDEV at opening ceremony of International Water Pioneers Summit (English only)

Following are the welcome remarks by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, at the opening ceremony of the International Water Pioneers Summit today (April 1):

Honourable Minister Li Guoying (the Minister of Water Resources), distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

A very warm welcome to all of you to Hong Kong and to this International Water Pioneers Summit. It is my honour to join prestigious water leaders on this significant occasion and to benefit from discussions among experts.

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to the co-organisers, including Hong Kong branch of the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management, the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers and the Hong Kong branch of the Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering. I thank them for their collaboration and generous effort to make the Summit possible. My heartfelt thanks also goes to the Minister of Water Resources of China and his team for their presence in this Summit. Your presence means a lot to us. I also wish to thank all our distinguished speakers and moderators from the Mainland and overseas for accepting our invitations and travelling to Hong Kong to participate in this Summit. We are honoured to welcome an exceptional lineup of speakers and moderators from nine countries across four continents here today. They are distinguished experts and leaders of international water and health organisations and senior government officials. With these renowned leaders sharing their insights, I am sure the upcoming exchanges would be inspiring and rewarding.

From the Hong Kong Palace Museum to the theme of the Summit

Today's venue, the Hong Kong Palace Museum showcasing the rich tapestry of Chinese art and culture, is a setting particularly fit for the Summit. Water is the essence of life and the cornerstone of human civilisation. It also has symbolic meanings in the Chinese culture. Most of you would have come across the Exhibition of Chinese Water Culture in the foyer before entering this Auditorium. The exhibition explains the origin, symbolism, philosophy and wisdom of water through the lens of Chinese culture. It also reminds us how water has shaped human civilisation, culture and connections.

The supply of Dongjiang water from the Mainland is a showcase of the Chinese water culture. It is not just an engineering achievement to address Hong Kong's water demand. More importantly, it is a touching demonstration of the core value in Chinese culture, "èi fā fā 14°" in Chinese, which means

"family connections are inseparable". The supply of Dongjiang water underscores the deep bonding between our country and Hong Kong as a special administrative region, as well as the unwavering love of our Motherland for Hong Kong. The extended spirit of unity and the sense of mission extending beyond the family to make the world a better place, serves as a guiding principle for us to work together to foster a community of life against the global water challenges.

With the growing impacts of global climate change and increasing pressure on how best we should use the finite resources around the world, the sustainable management of water is no longer optional but imperative. The theme of the Summit, "Smart Water · High-Quality Development", is undoubtedly very close to our hearts as it captures the urgency and importance of our having to overcome challenges we face nowadays. We need collective responses. We need innovative and actionable solutions. We also need forward-thinking strategies. Today's Summit comes in time.

The theme of the Summit – "Smart Water · High-Quality Development"

So how can we achieve "Smart Water · High-Quality Development"? Our morning session will focus on the high-quality development of water supply and technologies in response to global crises, the essential co-ordination of water, economy, and ecology for sustainable growth, and the transformative role of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in enhancing water management.

And we all know that the reliability and safety of water supplies are crucial to public health. So in the afternoon session, our speakers will lead us in delving into crucial strategies and technological advances for developing low-carbon, as well as green urban and rural water systems. We will also touch on recent developments in drinking water safety, and the challenges and opportunities in protecting health through water, adaptability, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).

The special panel discussion – Belt and Road

The Belt and Road Initiative proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2013 has connected countries, regions and continents through advancing infrastructure development and strengthening collaboration in various aspects. To bolster high-quality co-operation in water management among countries along the Belt and Road, a special panel discussion is arranged in this Summit to showcase successful examples of collaboration and highlight how shared expertise and resources can pave the way for sustainable water management across borders.

Special keynote speeches on the Dongjiang Water Supply

Another highlight of today's programme is the special keynote session on the Dongjiang water supply to Hong Kong, which is scheduled to take place later in the afternoon. I am sure that the renowned speakers would provide valuable insights on this mega water supply project, the achievement in

safeguarding the water quality of the Dongjiang water and a great strive taken over the years in advancing the operation and maintenance through smart technologies.

Ladies and gentlemen, the significance of this Summit lies not only in the exchange of knowledge but also in the spirit of collaboration it fosters. Water is not just a resource, it is a lifeline of the ecosystems, economies and communities to where we belong.

As we embark on today's discussions, let us remember that the challenges we face can only be solved through collective efforts. I encourage everyone here to actively engage in the discussions. Once again, a warm welcome to all of you and I wish the Summit every success. Thank you.