

Opening Statement
by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
for the hearing of the second report of
the People's Republic of China under the International
Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
8 May 2014, Geneva

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members,

We would like to thank all of you and our delegation leader Ambassador WU Hailong for the invitation. We appreciate the opportunity to introduce to you the progress in implementing the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

2. Starting with people's livelihood, the Statutory Minimum Wage came into force in Hong Kong in 2011, and a poverty line was set last year. This year, we propose to introduce a 'Low Income Working Family Allowance' to encourage low-income working families to stay in active employment and to promote self-reliance. Apart from receiving a basic allowance, beneficiary families may also receive a child allowance if they have eligible children or young people. We estimate that over 200 000 low-income families will benefit from the scheme.

3. On education, we have been deepening our education reform by extending free education to 12 years, and introducing a new academic structure. The new structure aims to promote whole-person development and improve the life-long learning capabilities of our students. We pledge full support for the Chinese Language education of our ethnic minorities, which includes providing for them, in primary and secondary schools, the "Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework", and more resources for school-based support.

4. On health, Hong Kong has one of the highest life expectancies in the world. In this regard, we will continue to strengthen the public healthcare services and expand the infrastructure of our public healthcare sector through, for example, the construction of new hospitals (including the Hong Kong Children's Hospital) and enhancement of existing hospital facilities, in order to address the needs of changing demographics and an ageing population. Moreover, the annual amount of the Health Care Voucher for the elderly will also be doubled to HK\$2,000.

5. On housing, the total housing supply target for the coming 10 years has been set at 470 000 units, amongst which 60 per cent will be public housing. This means that the supply of public housing in the coming 10 years will be 36 per cent more than what was pledged by the Government last year. This will help more low-income families to secure adequate housing.

6. On the cultural front, we strive to provide opportunities to broad participation in culture and the arts, to develop the potentials of artistic talents, as well as to create an environment conducive to the diversified and balanced development of culture and the arts. We are forging ahead the development of the West Kowloon Cultural District; a range of cultural and arts facilities will come on stream in stages starting from 2015-16 with a view to promoting arts and culture and meeting the growing cultural demands of the public. The Government will also continue to develop art programmes, build the audience base, promote arts education and nurture talent.

7. We will continue to protect the rights of our residents in accordance with the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, and relevant local legislation. Thank you.