

**Speech by Mr Donald Tsang, Chief Executive, at Hospital Authority  
Convention 2010 opening ceremony**

Vice Minister Zhang , Mr Wu, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to join you for the Hospital Authority Convention.

This year's event is particularly significant because it marks the 20th anniversary of the Hospital Authority. It is an occasion for us to congratulate all members of the Hospital Authority.

"Happy Staff, Healthy People" is an apt theme for stock taking of the past and strategising for the future at this important juncture of our healthcare development.

A healthy population is the foundation of a harmonious society, a dynamic workforce, a prosperous economy, and above all, a happy and productive community. My Administration is committed to maintaining the health and well-being of our people.

We have continuously increased public funding and resources to promote healthcare. Over the years, through the joint efforts of all in the health sector, we have built an advanced medical framework that is renowned for its high standards, professionalism and ethics.

Let me take this opportunity to share with you some of the wonders the Happy Staff in the HA have done in turning out Healthy People. We pledge to keep it that way for the next 20 years and beyond.

The HA now handles about 4.4 million cases annually, or an average of some 12,000 cases per day. Before the HA was set up in 1990, the life expectancy for men was 74.6 years and just over 80 years for women. Today, men can expect to live to almost 80 and women to over 86. During the same 20-year period, our infant mortality rate has been lowered from 5.9 to 1.7 deaths per 1,000 births. This ranks among the best in the world and highlights our system's effectiveness and efficiency.

We have also seen the commissioning of eight new hospitals as well as the redevelopment and expansion of other hospitals to provide more and better services to the public. The HA has progressively computerised its clinical management system since 1995 to enhance patient record management. This has streamlined the public-private interface in our current drive for a territory-wide electronic health record system.

On the manpower front, the number of doctors in the HA has more than doubled from 2,300 in 1990 to about 5,000 today. The nurse contingent has also grown by 25% over the past two decades. There are now almost 20,000 nurses taking good care of patients, and there will be many more.

The HA has done a great job and our medical sector is fighting fit. This is

exactly what the community expects and deserves from a caring, progressive and modern international city.

It is in times of crisis that the glare of the spotlight shines heaviest on our doctors, nurses and administrators. And in the past two decades we have witnessed some extraordinary times.

We have experienced several bouts of bird flu, and we have faced the devastating outbreak of SARS. More recently, the human swine flu pandemic has affected almost every corner of the globe, including Hong Kong.

These crises have tested our healthcare professionals, challenged our hospitals and forced us to make difficult decisions.

During these times of crisis, we have strengthened our resolve, fortified our defences against infectious diseases and retained the confidence of the public.

Our healthcare professionals have met each challenge courageously and effectively. Indeed in so doing some have made the ultimate sacrifice and moved the hearts of the whole community. They deserve our heartfelt thanks and appreciation.

The crises I have just mentioned have come out of left field, without warning. But there are other challenges that we can predict and anticipate.

Perhaps the most difficult long-term concern today is coping with an ageing population.

We must be prepared for this challenge. Otherwise, we face the prospect of placing unbearable strain on our resources and overstressing public finances in the long run.

Healthcare reform is high on my Administration's agenda, and is well under way. This reform process focuses on enhancing primary healthcare. We must provide comprehensive, continuous and co-ordinated services to patients and their families at the community level.

This will help to achieve early diagnosis and treatment of medical problems.

Family doctors and primary carers are the most effective gatekeepers for community health. The Government is rolling out a full range of measures to strengthen primary healthcare services.

We have launched a series of pilot projects to provide chronic disease patients with integrated care through public-private partnership. We will present a road map for the long-term development of primary healthcare in Hong Kong later this year.

We have also announced the development of a territory-wide patient-oriented electronic health record system. This will lead to better healthcare and

increased efficiency and reduce the risk of errors. By the time the system goes live in 2013/14, it will be one of the largest and most comprehensive e-Health record systems in the world.

Turning to healthcare capacity, at present private hospitals take up no more than 10% of our total hospital bed capacity. Yet, almost two million of our seven million people have private medical insurance schemes. We recently reserved four sites for private hospital development which has drawn strong private sector interest. Land disposal arrangements will be formulated by the end of this year for tendering.

Software enhancement must go hand in hand with hardware development.

In this respect, we are increasing training opportunities for local healthcare professionals. We are also attracting more medical talent from outside Hong Kong to promote the exchange of expertise, research and professional training.

My Administration has made a clear commitment to increase healthcare funding from 15% to 17% of recurrent Government expenditure by 2012.

We have also set aside \$50 billion to initiate a voluntary supplementary healthcare financing scheme. This scheme would have both insurance and savings components. The scheme aims to enhance price transparency and consumer protection, ensure sustained access to affordable private healthcare, and encourage people to save for their future healthcare.

We will consult the public on the details of the scheme this year.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are entering a new age of healthcare. It is an age of new technology, higher expectations and formidable challenges for the medical sector.

Hong Kong is in a relatively strong position to face the future. We have adequate financial resources, a deep pool of expertise and a tried and trusted medical infrastructure. I know we can continue to depend on the dedicated staff of the HA to provide the highest quality services.

It is easy for a layman such as myself to talk about the extraordinary challenges of our medical professionals. In reality, there is nothing ordinary about your profession at all. You deal with life and death on a daily basis. There is often no margin for error and no end to the workload.

I am grateful for this opportunity to express my gratitude to each and every one of you. And to assure you that the Government places healthcare at the very top of its agenda.

I wish the Hospital Authority a happy and healthy 20th anniversary and every success in the future.